

SNAPS

A COMIC WEEKLY OF COMIC STORIES BY COMIC AUTHORS.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 71.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 13, 1901.

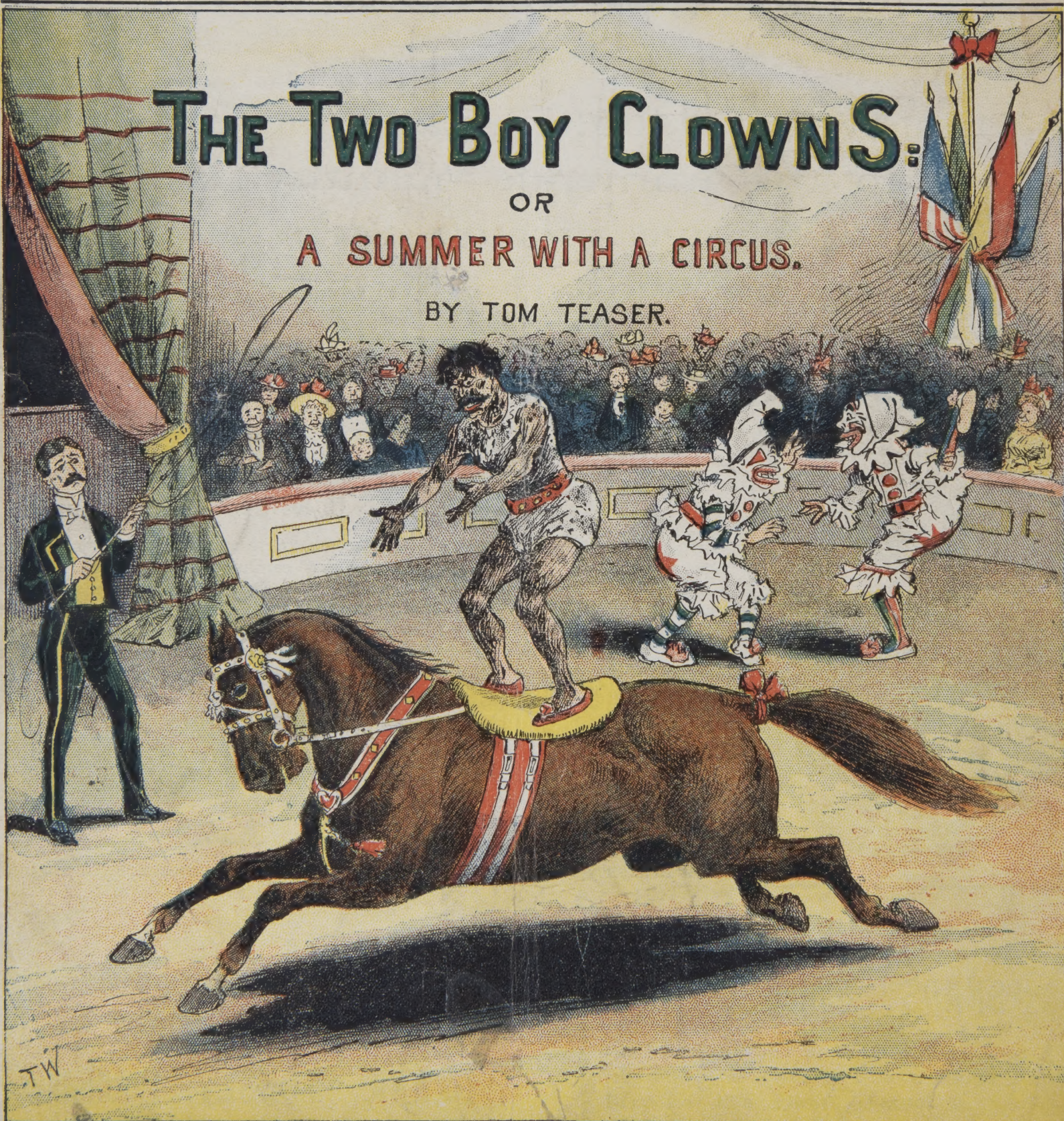
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THE TWO BOY CLOWNS:

OR

A SUMMER WITH A CIRCUS.

BY TOM TEASER.



Rosino was as black as soot from head to foot. That dazzling white suit of his was soot indeed. He was covered with it, his head, face, hands, and everything else.

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❖ SNAPS ❖

A Comic Weekly of Comic Stories by Comic Authors.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, October 9, 1899. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1901, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.

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NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 13, 1901.

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CHAPTER I.

"Now then, ladies and gents, we introduce to your notice the two celebrated and only twin clowns, the brothers Rinaldo, from the Paris Hippodrome, the Circe Nazionale of Havana the Teatro al Fresco of Milan, the Royal Italian Equestrian School of Naples, the Summer Arena of St. Petersburg, and in fact all the most famous rings of Europe, Australia and America, engaged at enormous expense for this exhibition only and to be seen nowhere else, the famous twin boy clowns, the brothers Rinaldo, ladies and gentlemen."

That speech of the ringmaster's was like an old street, it had been often aired, but would still wash.

The scene was the spacious pavilions—see posters—of the Great American and European Railroad Circus.

Mr. Summer was the proprietor and he had seen many hard winters, none harder than Mr. Winter, his silent partner, however.

The silent partner was making a good deal of noise just now, for he was the ringmaster and had a voice like a boarding house dinner bell, heard all over the house.

The circus was showing in a country town on the New England circuit, and the season had just about started.

It was all summer with the performers, and it would be all day with them if the gate receipts did not pan out well.

However, they had a tent full on this particular afternoon, and the chances were that they would keep that sort of thing up, the show being a good one.

It was called a Railroad Circus because the gang traveled in wagons and occasionally crossed a railroad track, and there is everything in a name.

However, I am forgetting the twin boy clowns, who have been trying to get in a word for the last half column.

They are not twins, but you mustn't mind a little circumstance like that.

It sounded better on the bills to call them twins, and so they were denominated twins.

Their names were Rob Rattle and Dick Dazzle, but Rinaldo had a trans-oceanic twang to it and Rinaldo it was.

The boys were about eighteen, billed as fourteen—but that does not signify—were great chums, good performers and full of—well, full of fun.

They took the biscuit in fun making, and were a big card; so much so that they swept the deck and made the chief clown—an old curmudgeon named Krank—and rightly named he was—turn green with jealous rage under the white paint on his ugly mug.

However, to proceed to business, since the boy clowns have been announced.

Hoop la! here they come!

Two young fellows, dressed all in white, with no end of ruffles and frills and fluting on their suits, comical hats surmounting their comical mugs, and a smile of welcome to the assemblage lighting their painted faces.

"Good morning, good morning, good morning, friends," says Rob.

"Hello, girls! How do, fellers?" adds Dick.

Then they both go tumbling around the ring, turning flip-flaps so fast that you can scarcely tell legs from arms.

"Mr. Winter snaps his whip, and Rob jumps and pretends to put his finger into the place where a chunk of his hide has been taken out.

"Are you going to sing anything for the ladies and gentlemen, young gentlemen?" asked the affable gentleman with the gold-braided coat and long whip lash.

"I've got a little thing of my own that I invented for the occasion," said Rob.

"Very well, sir; let's hear it."

"First, however, will you tell me why an elephant never climbs a tree?"

"I am sure I cannot. Why does an elephant never climb a tree, my dear sir?"

"Because he can never get more than so far away from the trunk. Catch on?"

"Very good, sir, and now will you oblige?"

"Hold on," said Dick. "I've got one."

"Very well, sir, let's hear it."

"Why should a traveling man's trunk be made of paper?"

"I am sure I do not know. I should imagine that wood would be better."

"No, it ain't; worst thing possible, wood is."

"Why is wood the worst material for a traveling man's trunk, my dear boy?"

"Because it can always be taken for board. See?"

"Very good, sir; very good, indeed. You have had experience in that line, I suppose?"

"No, sir. Never had my trunk seized yet, sir."

"Indeed! That is remarkable."

"No, it ain't."

"Why isn't it?"

"Because I never take a trunk—put my wardrobe in my pocket."

"Well, sir; step aside, if you please, your brother wants to sing."

"Do the boys and girls want to hear him?"

"Certainly they do."

"Then they don't know him as well as we do, do they?"

"You mustn't talk like that about your brother, sir."

"I mustn't?"

"No."

"He ain't your brother, is he?"

"No, certainly not."

"Then what have you got to say about it?"

"But I have asked him to sing, and he has promised to do so."

"Well, you lent him ten dollars yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And ten last week?"

"Certainly."

"And ten this morning?"

"Yes."

"Do you think you will ever get your money?"

"Certainly. I hold his notes."

"Well, if you hold his notes how can he sing? Give 'em back and let him hold them himself."

"Take your base, young fellow," said Rob, "and give another fool a chance. Listen to my tale of woe."

Thereupon Rob rattled off the following:

"Can a man live on love, and nothing besides?

Well, it isn't easy to do it.

Can he manage on wind to fill his insides?

Well, it isn't easy to do it.

He may live on cheek instead of on cash.

And hang up the butcher for the price of his hash,

And by running his face stove off a crash,

But it isn't easy to do it.

"Can a man use his friends like so many tools?

Well, it isn't easy to do it.

Can he humbug them all, like a parcel of fools?

Well, it isn't easy to do it.

He may borrow from all without meaning to pay,

Soak his friends all around, and then run away,

And think that there'll ne'er be a reckoning day,

But it isn't easy to do it.

"An old maid might marry a handsome young man,

But it isn't easy to do it.

Or a William goat live on tomato cans,

But it isn't easy to do it.

A dude may manage to lay up the wealth,
A political heeler do good by stealth,
Or a man live on shavings and still keep his health,
But it isn't easy to do it."

The big audience howled with delight at this effusion, and wanted more of it.

"Couldn't you sing fourteen or fifteen more verses of the same sort?" asked Dick.

"Well, I might, but it isn't easy to do it," returned Rob.

The two boys then did a comical act of their own on the horizontal bar, and then stepped aside to make room for Madame Floralie in her great bareback act.

She had bare shoulders, to be sure, but the bills ought to have stated that they meant the horse's back.

She was called Floralie on the programme, and also the famous French equestrienne, but she had never been any nearer to France than the plaster of Paris she wore on her neck and arms.

The audience did not know she was Irish, but then they had not heard her speak.

Being a Cork woman, she was naturally light on horseback, and could ride like a fairy.

She flew round the ring with the greatest of ease and pink tights, not to mention gauzy skirts, and the canvas roofs just wobbled with the thunders of applause.

"Now, sir, will you bring the lady some hoops?" asked the polite ringmaster, when Floralie had ridden two or three times around.

"I did not think she wore them," said Rob.

"Paper hoops, you jackass," returned the ringmaster.

"Why do you call me a jackass, Mr. Winter?"

"Because I can see the donkey in your face."

"Well, I didn't know it shone as much as that. Why, it must be a regular mirror."

"Will you bring the lady some hoops, sir?" cried the ringmaster in the pompous manner peculiar to the profession, and with a fierce snap of his whip.

Two or three attendants in livery coats and top boots ran into the ring carrying big hoops covered with paper.

Then some gayly ornamented soap boxes were brought out and placed at intervals around the ring.

After that some other fellows in fancy coats stood on the boxes and held the hoops over the track, while Floralie dashed around on her fiery untamed car horse.

Bang she went through one hoop after the other, knocking the tar out of them, or rather, the paper, while all hands yelled.

Then Mr. Krank came into the ring and said something that might have been funny in the days of Noah and the ark.

Krank was the boss clown.

He wasn't called Krank on the bills, however.

That would not have done at all, you know.

He was Pete Short, the famous white-faced Momus and Shakespearean jester, if you please.

Mr. Pete Short, after getting off some mummified witticisms of antediluvian days, announced that he would also do some big jumping.

A horse was led out and a big paper hoop was given to two attendants to hold up.

One stood on the fancy soap box in the ring and the other on the same sort of thing near the rail.

This was where the two boy clowns got hunk on Krank.

He was always doing something mean to them.

They, on the other hand, were always putting up jobs on him in consequence.

That hoop looked just like all the other hoops, but it wasn't, all the same.

It lay on the pile of hoops prepared for the afternoon, the same number being always used.

Four good hoops had been knocked silly, and this was the fifth.

Krank always used the fifth hoop on the pile for his act, and two men always held it up for him.

They were not aware that this hoop was any different from the rest.

It was as much unlike as chalk is unlike cheese.

Wait a moment and you will observe the dissimilarity.

To the audience and to Pete Short, the famous white-faced Momus, it looked like a big paper hoop.

Well, Krank got on his horse after a great deal of funny business, and rode around the ring.

When going at the proper rate of speed, he gave the signal for the hoop to be put up.

It was, and he went at it like a bull at a fence.

Generally he went through it head first.

It was only because his head was not hard enough that he did not do it this time.

Bang!

It sounded like a hammer on boiler iron.

On dashed the horse, away flew the hoop, and over on the tank bark rolled Krank.

The big white hoop was observed to have a big round dent in it where Krank's head had struck it.

In other respects, however, it was doing finely.

The attendants looked astonished, the supers giggled, the ringmaster grinned, and the two boys just doubled themselves up with mirth.

A word or two about that hoop.

It wasn't as papery as one would suppose.

It was made of thin sheet-iron, covered with paper.

No wonder Krank had failed to go through it.

His head was not a dynamite cartridge.

No wonder it had sounded like a gong when his head struck against it.

Why wouldn't it?

No wonder it had a big dent in it and that it had been torn from the hands of the supers.

What else could have happened, to be sure?

The best of it was nobody knew anything about it beforehand.

Nobody but the two boy clowns, of course.

They knew all about it.

They had caused it to be made, and had sneaked it on to the pile of other hoops.

It looked like the rest, albeit a trifle heavier, and was in the proper place.

That was their little return for some act of spite on Krank's part toward them.

The fact was he was jealous of their success, and was always trying to injure them in a professional way.

That's what he got for it.

Well, he rolled over in the dirt, split his calico breeches, rubbed the white off his face, and cut a very undignified figure even for a clown.

The crowd thought the act was intentional and howled with delight.

In fact it was the funniest thing that Pete Short had done in a long time.

He picked himself up, glared at the supers and attendants, and went off without inflicting any of his usual stale puns upon a long-suffering public.

Something was wrong, he knew, and he meant to investigate.

He had never been knocked silly by a hoop before, nor had he dented any in such a fashion.

Something was crooked, of course.

Winter tumbled to the thing at once when he heard the trick hoop reverberate, but he gave nothing away.

He couldn't, of course, for he did not know who had put up the job on Krank.

The clown went into the ante-room, where the smashed hoops were generally thrown after being used, and examined that particular one when it came in from the ring.

Then he saw why he had not been able to go through it as usual.

Knowing no one else to blame, he went for the innocent supers and proceeded to knock spots out of them.

They did not dare to retaliate in kind, for Krank was a star and they were only supes, sawdust luggers, canvas jugglers, candy butchers and the like.

The only thing they could do was to get out of the way, and that they did with neatness and dispatch.

Krank did not suspect the boys of putting up the job on him, but he was down on them all the same.

After the afternoon show he went to Mr. Winter and said:

"I say, Winter, you oughtn't to have them boys in the ring at the same time with me. They mug the crowd, cut up all sorts of shines, and take the attention off the principal performer."

"Oh, pshaw, Floralie doesn't mind it," said the ringmaster, who was stage manager, equestrian director and everything else.

"What do I care for Floralie?" growled the famous Shakespearean jester. "I said the principal performer, didn't I?"

"Well, isn't she that?"

"No!"

There was something very peremptory and decided in that negative.

"Who is?" asked Winter.

"I am!"

There was no mistaking the importance of those two little words. Winter snickered.

He did not have the same high opinion of the great clown which the latter himself had.

"Oh, well, I'll have your act put on first, and announce the boys afterward," he said.

That did not suit the clown at all.

"What's the need of announcing them at all?" he growled. "They

It hung just low enough to scalp him as he passed through. As he went in head first and head down there was no danger of his yanking his eyes out.

Indeed it was so balanced that if anything but his auburn locks had struck it down it would have fallen.

It might have missed connection with his wig, to be sure.

However, the snaps put up by these boys seldom missed fire.

"How in creation did that thing get in here?" snorted Rosy.

"H'm! nice thing that is. The old thing is all busted, bits of wood and everything loose in it. Hang me if I'll do that act again if it's going to come out this way."

The white-faced Momus came in while Rosino was sputtering away.

Rosy put on his wig, but Krank examined the interior of the drum.

"That thing was done a purpose, Rose," growled the clown.

"Ha, what's that?" asked Rose.

He did not like Krank any better than the rest of them did, by the way.

However, he was interested in this affair.

"That hook was put there on purpose," said Krank. "It was a regular put up job."

"H'm! guess maybe it was," said Rose.

"And I'll bet you I know who it was."

"I don't care if you do," returned Rose, who did not like a sneak.

"It was them boys, them Rinaldo brothers."

"Ha! pretty good for them," chuckled Rose, who liked the boy clowns. "Clever in them to think of such a snap."

He was still mad at having been scalped before the public in that manner, but he wasn't going to say anything against the boys.

"You ought to complain to Summer about them," persisted Krank.

"Ah, go on, you don't know that they did it," said Rose.

Then he went away, not caring to have any more talk with the old duffer.

That didn't suit Krank for a cent.

"Well, if he doesn't take it up, I will," he growled, "and if them boys ain't fired out of this show, I'm very much mistaken."

That meant a fracas for our boys.

You need have no fear about their ability to take care of themselves, however.

CHAPTER III.

Krank kept the promise made to himself, to make trouble for the boys.

He was mean enough to do anything to satisfy his spite, no matter whether it injured the boys or not.

The next day, when the boys came to go through their act, he came on himself and interrupted them, singing his own songs and interrupting them whenever they tried to say anything.

"I say, Dick," said Bob, "did you ever hear about the dog that wouldn't let the ox eat the hay and couldn't eat it himself?"

"Yes, but you'd better tell it, for I think that our friend never heard it."

"Nor that other old chestnut which says that only one fool ought to be heard at a time."

"Well, as to being a fool, he fills the bill, and suppose we let him have his say."

The boys started to leave, but the crowd wouldn't have it that way.

They cheered the boys and hissed Krank till he had to go off.

That made him mad and he went to Summer about it.

Summer gave him a very wintry reception.

"What are you kicking about?" he demanded. "You tried to run the boys out and you got the razoo yourself."

"They're too fresh."

"And you too stale."

"Do they run the whole show?"

"No, but they have a place on the bill, and you've got to let them have it."

"They are always playing jokes on me."

"Then let 'em alone."

"I'll break their necks, the young loafers."

"All right, go on talking that way if you like. You'll get it in the neck yourself, if you do."

"Oh, yes, that's always the way, the good performers are shoved to the wall to make room for these upstarts."

That was the way with Krank.

When he didn't growl he whined.

"You make me tired," said Summer, in disgust.

At that moment a roar of laughter and applause came from the pavilion.

The boys were catching on with all four feet.

The sound was not at all a pleasant one to the celebrated white-faced Momus and Shakespearian jester.

He went off where he could not hear it and tried to hate himself, he was so mad.

The boys, having the thing to themselves, made the most of it.

"Can you tell me, Bob, what makes a cat go up a tree?"

"It ain't chestnuts, is it?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps it's rats?"

"Not at all."

"Maybe it's a dog after her?"

"You're off your route, Bob."

"Well, what does make a cat go up a tree?"

"Her feet, of course, you sleepy head. She couldn't go up without 'em."

"Very good. Now I've got one for you."

"Please elucidate."

"What's the first thing you do when you shave?"

"I never do."

"Well, when a man shaves, then?"

"Lathers himself."

"No."

"Gets out his razor."

"Nixey."

"Goes to the barber's?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Get's hot water."

"Nope."

"What does he do, then?"

"You don't know what a man does before he shaves?"

"No; what does he do?"

"He raises a beard."

"Before he shaves? Ah, yes, quite good."

"You're quite a young shaver yourself, and I'll give you another."

"Let her go."

"Where was the first blow struck on the ark?"

"Did Mrs. Noah strike it?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Why, if she struck it, she probably hit her fingers."

"No, sir."

"It isn't the same old gag, is it, about striking the nail on the head?"

"No, sir. I never mentioned nails."

"What was the question?"

"Where was the first blow struck on the ark?"

"When the whales came on board? They blow, you know."

"No diagrams with your jokes, please."

"Do you know the answer?"

"Of course I do."

"Where was the first blow struck?"

"That's it."

"Did they get to fighting, do you mean?"

"Oh, go on and answer the question."

"Where was the first blow struck on the ark?"

"Yes."

"You mean they had a storm, don't you?"

"No, I do not."

"Well, then, where was the first blow struck on the ark?"

"Give it up?"

"Yes."

"You can't guess it?"

"No."

"You don't know where the first blow was struck on the ark?"

"I said I didn't."

"Well, it was struck on the first piece of wood of course."

"Do you know where you ought to get struck?"

"No."

"Turn around and I'll show you."

Dick turned and Bob tried to give it to him in the neck.

Then Dick jumped aside and Bob went spinning around the ring turning somersaults.

"I owe you one for that," said Bob, when he stopped spinning.

"Well, I'll sing you a song if you'll call it square."

"Let her flutter."

What Dick sang was something like this:

"Is marriage a failure, or is it a go?

I don't know—I'd like to try.

Is it only a bore to be some girl's beau?

I don't know—I'd like to try.

Is it worth it to take up a mother-in-law,

To pay her board and stand all her jaw,

And have her go for you with tooth and claw?

I don't know—I'd like to try.

"I'd like to know how it feels to be rich!

I don't know—I'd like to try.

To have lots of money, and houses and sich,

I don't know—I'd like to try.

I'd like to find out if it feel very funny

To know that you never need ask one for money,

But it might be like getting too full of honey,

I don't know—I'd like to try.

"Do you think an old maid would like a nice man?

I don't know—she might try.

Would a tramp take his beer from only a can?

I don't know—he could try.

Could you laugh if a fat man sat down on your hat?

Would the fat man be lean, and the lean man be fat?

Could Vanderbilt live in an Italian flat?

I don't know—he'd better try."

"That'll do for a trial trip," said Bob, and then he and Dick got off some more funny tumbling and finally skipped out.

Old Krank was not satisfied with what he had done for the boys, and he tried to work his spite against them in some other way.

He tried several mean dodges on them until they finally tumbled.

Then they resolved to get hunk on him.

The only thing was to know how to do it with neatness and dispatch.

It was also quite necessary that the celebrated Shakespearian jester should not suspect their agency in the matter.

Krank had an old time act with a trick mule.

You all know how it is worked of course.

The clown fetches in his mule and offers any jay five dollars to ride that mule once around the ring.

It seems easy enough, and the hayseeder are all anxious to earn that five cases.

They don't do it, of course, and then the clown rides the mule with ease.

It's a part of his training, of course, to let his master ride him.

Every one else is thrown off, and that's where the laugh comes in.

The famous Pete Short worked this sort of gag for all it was worth.

There was always some gilly who hadn't heard of the trick.

Some men never hear about bunco men until they get soaked for forty or fifty dollars, maybe more.

It was the same way with the mule trick.

As often as it had been tried, there was always some smart young man who wanted to show off, and generally had an opportunity to do so.

Not in the way intended, it is needless to add.

However, the trick wasn't such a bad one, and so Krank was allowed to retain it, as well as his time-tried jokes.

It helped the boys to work off their job on Krank, however, that mule joke did.

On the afternoon set apart for the snap the boys were ready for business.

They had their little gag all primed and loaded and ready to go off.

Krank came in with his mule—two of a kind, if you ever saw it.

Then he made his usual appeal to the gawks on the benches.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is my mule, Jerry—a nice, quiet, gentle animal, as docile as a mouse. Who is the first man to ride him around the ring?"

A tall, lanky youth with white hair, skim-milk eyes, and freckles as big as your thumbnail, took up the invitation.

He reckoned he could ride that mule as well as the next fellow.

He didn't do any worse, at all events.

It was easy enough to get on Jerry's back.

In fact, he seemed really as docile as Pete Short said he was.

Getting on was one thing.

Riding was another.

The first thing that mule did was to roll over.

The hayseeder went over with him.

After that he did not feel so sanguine.

However, he tried again.

That time Jerry lay down and stayed there.

The gawk tried to yank him to his feet.

All he did was to bust what he called his galluses, rip off his collar button and split his waistcoat.

Then he concluded that he didn't want to ride after all.

"Why, you don't know nothing about animiles, son," cried the clown. "I'll bet you five dollars you can't ride Jerry."

The hayseeder was not betting that day.

Another young jay was, however.

"Gimme five dollars if I will ride him?" he asked.

"Certainly, certainly, step right up."

This rural member wore blue and white checked pants, as he called them, cowhide boots, a rabbit-skin waistcoat and a straw hat.

He also chewed gum incessantly, and smacked his lips ten times a minute.

He deserved all he got.

Anybody who will chew gum and smack their lips ought to get soaked.

Well, to proceed.

He didn't get on Jerry's back at all.

Jerry had no desire to carry another donkey, most likely.

THE TWO BOY CLOWNS.

First he gave that granger a kick in the ribs that floored him. Then he would stand still a minute.

The poor jay found that five-dollar note quite beyond his reach.

He sweated and puffed and panted all for nothing.

He couldn't ride Jerry, and that settled it.

"My eyes! Krank's mule is doing better than usual to-day," used Mr. Winter.

As ringmaster, he was of course present to witness the fun.

"The old feller is livelier than I ever seen him," thought Krank.

Guess he must have been eating an oat or two."

Jerry was lively, sure enough.

"Who's going to earn that five dollars?" asked Krank.

The second victim had retired a sadder, but no wiser man, as the oet doesn't say.

Then a two-for-a-quarter dude took up the challenge.

Five dollars was more money than he had had at one time for months.

It was a big temptation, of course.

"Those fellahs don't know how to tweek the animal at all," he declared. "They must use fawmness, of course, but they must be kind too, don't you know."

The dude, whose name was Gawge, wore a maple derby in the latest freak of fashion, trousers as wide as coffee bags, a white boweling waistcoat and a wide welt coat.

He ought to have got a wide welt in the neck.

"I'll wide yaw mule faw five dollahs," he said, as he stepped into the ring.

"Who opened the cage and let that thing out?" asked Bob.

"Take it home to its mommer," chuckled Dick.

Pete Short had no spontaneous remarks to make.

His little speeches were always learned by heart beforehand, and sprung on the victim at the right moment.

"Glad to have you try, sir. You look as if you could earn it," he said. "Now then, Jerry."

The dude approached the mule, and the latter kicked.

Even a mule may have tender feelings.

How would you like being talked to by a dude yourself?

Well, then, consider how that other mule felt.

"Clevah fellah," said Gawge, "nice old Jewy, so him was. He's going to let Gawgy wide him, isn't he, old man?"

"Police!" yelled Dick.

"Somebody get a club," added Bob.

"Oh, what an ass!" said the ringmaster.

"Don't say that, you insult Jerry," said Bob.

Gawge was going to be so nice and kind.

He patted Jerry on the head, and this time the brute did not object.

When Gawge tried to mount, however, the circus began.

Jerry let him get into the saddle, but that was all.

He rose upon his hind feet and dumped Gawge off as neat as wax.

Gawge did not try any more kindness after that.

"Yaw a howid nawsty bwute, be Jove," he sputtered.

Then the silly goose aimed a kick at Jerry's ribs.

Jerry jumped aside, and Gawge seemed to be trying to kick a hole in the top of the pavilion.

Then he sat down with considerable more violence than grace, and there was an ominous sound, as his slim legs spread out to their fullest extent.

One of the town tailors had a big rip to sew up the next day.

Gawge crawled under the benches and got away without more than a hundred persons seeing what happened.

"Well, that five dollar offer remains good," said Krank, "who's going to take it up?"

This time another countryman entered the arena.

He was more than two-thirds legs, and thought himself some pumpkins.

"Yu moight's waal gimme thet five dollars neow," he said, with trembling modesty. "cos it's mine, yu bet."

"Such gall deserves a medal," said Bob.

"Or a Morgue," added Dick.

"Well, Sam Pumpkins, you think you can ride Jerry, do you?" asked Krank.

"Yew bet I can, mister. I know all about hosses, and they ain't one o' the durned critters I can't handle."

"Well, try Jerry."

The hayseeder did not try Jerry very much.

Jerry tried him—his patience, his endurance, and everything else.

He got on all right, and then Jerry tried to shake him.

Hayseeder wound his long legs about that mule's body and clung to his neck.

It seemed as if the gawk would win.

Jerry could not shake him off apparently.

What that mule didn't know about getting rid of an unwelcome passenger, however, was not worth knowing.

He started off at a great rate, and suddenly fell against the rail or fence separating the ring from the seats.

Then Hayseeder concluded he had had enough.

Jerry helped him off as soon as he began unlimbering his legs.

At the next moment the rural member found himself flat on his back.

Then Krank concluded to put on the finishing touches.

He led Jerry to the centre of the ring, stood alongside the other mule, bowed and smiled, and said:

"You will now see, ladies and gentlemen, how easy it is to control this docile animal."

Jerry looked wisely at the crowd, and then hung his head.

He certainly looked docile enough then.

I'll let you into a little bit of a secret.

There was a surprise coming for that clown.

Jerry was not the tractable animal he supposed.

In fact he wasn't Jerry at all, but a strange mule.

Maybe Krank was not going to have fun?

Perhaps Jerry would have the most, however.

CHAPTER IV.

The famous Pete Short, the white-faced Momus, et cetera, was going to put his trick mule through his paces.

The animal had already played the dickens with several countrymen and dudes.

That was because they did not know how to manage him, the clown said.

He would now show them what a mild and docile creature that mule was.

Then he gave a sudden spring, got on the mule's back and cracked him on the ribs.

That mule was not used to the business.

Krank thought he was, but he wasn't.

The boys had substituted a regular kicking, unbroken Jack for the one usually performing.

He did not treat Krank any better than he had served the other fellows.

He pitched the clown over his head just as though he had been only a common man.

The first thing that Krank knew, he was sitting in the sawdust with his legs stretched out, while that mule stood in front of him gazing at him in the most solemnly comic manner you ever saw.

It just broke that crowd all up to see it.

Krank wore a look of disgust on his painted mug as he wondered if he were all there or not.

The mule winked at him, one ear up and the other down, as though deliberating what to do next.

It was the funniest thing the famous white-faced Momus had done yet.

The best of it was that he had not intended to do it.

He couldn't blame it on the boys, either, for no one knew of the change in the mules.

The fellows that the mule had thrown were wild with glee over Krank's discomfiture.

They all had something to say about it.

"Thought yew could ride that ere mule, b'gosh."

"That ain't no better'n I did, hang me if it be."

"Shucks, ole man, dew yew call that ridin' him?"

"Aw, the fellah cawn't do any better than any othah fellah, don't ye know."

"Oh, yaas, yu'll show us, won't yu? Yu know a heap, yu du."

"Try it again, Whitey. Give us some more of the same sort."

"You're a dandy mule driver, you are."

All hands had something to say about it.

They guyed that deluded clown most unmercifully.

Krank thought he must preserve his reputation, and he tried to ride that mule again.

This time the animal was too sudden for him.

He could do nothing at all with the beast.

The latter had been fooled with enough, and he did not want any more of it.

Krank couldn't get near him, and he finally broke away and dusted out of the ring.

The clown had to do the same, all hands guyed him so.

"Blamed if I know what's the matter with that brute!" he growled. "I never saw him act so before. Somebody must have been feeding him up."

He never tumbled, and he omitted his mule act until convinced that Jerry had reformed.

The boys were still ahead in the race, and were ready for any snaps that came along.

They had some new gags to spring upon the crowd that night, and the tent was jammed.

They came tumbling into the ring, and raised a laugh as soon as they appeared.

"Hello, fellers! I'm well. How are you?" cried Bob.

"Good evening, girls! Glad to see so many of you to-night!" put in Dick.

"I've got something to ask you, sonny," said Bob.

"Well, go ahead and ask it, my boy."

"What's the difference between a dog-cart and a wheelbarrow?"

"One wheel."

"No, sir."

"Give it up, then."

"You don't know the difference between a dog-cart and a wheelbarrow?"

"No."

"Why, in a dog-cart you can take a trip up the country."

"And a wheelbarrow?"

"Gives you a trip up every time you run against it."

"Well, you ought to take a trip to Sing Sing for that."

"Can you do any better?"

"Yes."

"Do it."

"When does the sun rise?"

"When it gets in the yeast."

"No, sir."

"When the weather clerk tells it to."

"No."

"Well, I never saw it rise myself, so I can't tell."

"You don't know when the sun rises?"

"When the old man comes down to ask him if he'll stay to breakfast, I suppose."

"Nixey."

"Well, when does the sun rise?"

"Just about the time you go to bed. If you would sit up a little longer you might see it."

"Well, I can't keep such late hours as you do, you know."

"Well, sing the ladies and gentlemen something and I'll forgive you."

The young fellow responded in the following fashion:

"Can you tell why a man wears trousers like bags,
Or why a young man calls his father his jags?"

It's the fashion.

Why do girls wear fur capes in the middle of June,
And in giddy apparel outshine all the coons?

It's the fashion.

"What makes the young men wear ridiculous hats,
And get themselves up like a parcel of flats?"

It's the fashion.

They stick out their elbows as if hugging a bundle,
While the girls a homely pug dog will fondle,

It's the fashion.

Why is everything English cracked up to the skies,
And a slang Cockney accent a wonderful prize?

It's the fashion.

It's the fashion to make yourself look just too silly,
And you've got to be either a fool or a gilly,

It's the fashion.

"It's the thing for a girl to be awfully loud,
For a six-dollar clerk to treat the whole crowd.
But to live on your income, and pay all your debts,
To dress neatly, deal squarely, and have no regrets,
Oh, that's not the fashion."

"Why don't the nigger minstrels get some new jokes?" asked Bob.

"It ain't the fashion. Say?"

"Well?"

"What makes all the runaway cashiers go to Canada?"

"It's the fashion."

"That's so, and I say?"

"Say it."

"Why does a dog wag his tail?"

"It's the fashion."

"No."

"Why then?"

"Flies."

"We didn't use to call 'em that."

"Well, the fashion's changed."

After this the boys did some more funny business, and then skipped out to give way to the Great Rosino, Floralie and the corps of ground and lofty tumblers, and all the rest of the gang.

There was one of the canvasmen by the name of Hunks, upon whom the boys sometimes liked to play jokes, and when they went out, after finishing their act, they found this fellow asleep in the dressing-room.

"Well, this is nice," said Bob. "Hunks has been on another racket."

"Positively the last one this season," laughed Dick, "as they all are."

"I believe we shall have to give Mr. Hunks a lesson."

"Play roots on him, you mean, my boy."

"Well, it's all the same thing, isn't it?"

"Yes, only he never seems to learn his lesson."

Hunks was fond of spirituous liquors, and frequently imbibed more thereof than was good for him.

Summer had threatened more than once to discharge him on the spot the very next time he was found in a condition of how-came

ou-so, and sooner or later he might be relied upon to keep his word.

Firs Hunks had remembered this, and had sneaked into the room occupied by the boys to get a nap and a brace up, and then attend the business.

Each. "What'll we do with him?" asked Bob.

He "I'll tell you. Come into the property room."

He In that curiosity shop they found hoops, barrels, banners, drums, uniforms, bunches of artificial flowers, fairies' wings, gold chains, a medallion of the best brass, and lots of other rubbish.

As There was among the rest a big rubber anaconda, used by Miss

Gue: snake charmer and wound living pythons around her fairy form.

Jer She had no desire to handle the living articles, and stuffed or imitation snakes were more to her fancy.

Th Dick had been thinking of this venomous reptile when the boys met poke of giving Hunks a lesson, and his gaze now rested upon it. This it lay coiled up on a pile of horse blankets.

Fi "Great snake charming act," said Dick, as he lifted the sham snake from its resting place and threw one end of it over his shoulder.

It er. Then he and Bob returned to their dressing-room where Hunks still slept.

ind They coiled the terrible creature upon Hunks' breast, with the head looking him in the face, and the tail fastened to the seat of the canvasman's trousers.

ates Then the boys awaited developments.

owe H Pretty soon there came a crash of music, as Dick knew there would, for the entrance of the Great Rosino.

he The noise awoke Hunks, and maybe a dash of water that Bob threw in his face also had something to do with it.

c At any rate, he did wake and sat up.

P The first thing he saw was that big snake sitting on his stomach.

H "Great Scott! I've got 'em again!" he howled.

pr "Got what again?" asked Bob and Dick.

"Snakes!"

aid "Nonsense."

T "Don't you see that big feller sitting on me?"

E "No."

E They did not see it because they weren't looking.

V "Wow! I see it!" howled Hunks jumping up.

The snake fell to the ground, and Hunks made a dash for the canvas flap, which served for a door.

"There he is!" cried Bob.

Hunks turned his head, and then gave a howl.

The serpent was following him, as sure as guns.

He did not notice that the thing was going after his tail first.

He saw that it was there, and that was enough. Moreover, it had a very life-like twist to itself, and squirmed and turned in a very snakey manner.

Hunk gave a yell, and lighted out of that dressing-room in short order.

He ran into Krank's room by mistake, instead of outside, just when the famous white-faced jester was removing the dazzling complexion that he wore in the ring.

Krank had a holy horror of snakes, and when he saw a twelve-foot one suddenly appear he fell backward and entered most unceremoniously the dressing-room of the Great Rosino, who was in the ring at that moment.

Canvas walls are easier to fall through than lath and plaster lines, and that is how Mr. Peter Short, alias Krank, changed his quarters so suddenly.

As for Hunks, he was as much frightened by Krank's sudden disappearance as the latter was by the former's sudden appearance. Krank had gone under the canvas, strictly speaking, instead of through it, but he disappeared all the same, and there was nothing to show where he had departed.

"Gosh!" muttered Hunks. "I've got 'em worse'n I thought."

He turned to depart and then saw the big snake again, his own motions imparting a certain liveliness to the wriggler behind him.

"Gee whizz! Get out!" and Hunks fled.

This time he got into the apartment used by the lords and ladies, knights and esquires, otherwise men and boys who acted as supers in the grand entree.

Several of them were congregated in the place when he made his sudden entrance.

A lord in a red flannel coat and a paper helmet, who sat on an overturned feed bucket placed on the grass, gave a howl and fell off his perch.

The snake man, who was wont to tie himself up in a double bow knot and eat strawberries from a fork placed between his toes, recognized a kindred spirit and trod on the serpent's head as Hunk flew past.

The pin which held the tail to the seat of the canvasman's breeches did not give way.

The rubber snake was thus distended or extended, perhaps, to a length greatly exceeding its usual dimensions.

Hunks felt a tug behind him and turned to see what caused it.

"By gravy! He's gettin' bigger," howled the frightened Hunks.

He was quite sober by this time.

Such a rapid growing as that was enough to sober anybody.

He gave a jump and the snake's tail yanked the pin out of the canvasman's trousers.

The snake flew back like a return ball, coiled around the contortionist and upset him.

Everybody recognized the dangerous character of the reptile now, and Hunks got a terrible chaffing.

He realized himself that he had been sold when he saw the snake man rolling up the imitation python and then calmly sitting upon it.

Then he felt rather cheap and wanted to crawl.

"Gosh! don't ye s'pose I knowed that wasn't a live snake?" he asked. "I was only just tryin' to fool you fellers."

"That won't do, Hunks."

"Too thin, Hunks."

"Your treat this time."

"Had 'em again, didn't you?"

"Hain't had nothing," growled Hunks.

The elastic snake was returned to the property room, and Hunks saw no more of him or of any other kind of snakes for some time.

Pete Short, the celebrated, as scared as Hunks was, stuck his head under the canvas after the man had departed, and looked all around in search of the monster that had so terrified him.

The naphtha lamps revealed nothing, and he proceeded to crawl cautiously into his own compartment, still keeping his eye peeled for snakes.

"What in time do they want to be so careless for and let those beggars get out of their cages?" he muttered, still glaring around in search of the boa.

He was half in and half out of his room when the great Bill Rose entered his own apartment after having received the rapturous plaudits of delighted thousands, as the pasters had it.

He saw the rear portion of Krank's anatomy just leaving his room.

"That old swoop been trying to hook something?" he asked himself.

Then he planted one foot on the spot where Pete Short did the most of his sitting down, with a good deal of force.

Krank suddenly shot into his own room in the most summary fashion.

He wiped off all the grease paint on one side of his face on the grass, and put on a lot of grit and dirt to take its place.

"Jerusalem! what's that?" he remarked, in a manner as explosive as his entrance had been. "I'll bet I've been bitten."

"Then scratch," said the mashing William from the other side of the tent cloth, "and don't come loafing around my room again if you don't want your stupid old head broken."

Bill Rose did not like Krank any better than the rest of the company did.

"Well, I guess if you had a forty foot snake chase you, you'd get out of the way, no matter where it was," growled the white-faced genius.

"Rats!" said Rosino.

Krank had nothing to say, for he was now aware of the reason of his sudden slide over the grass and did not care for any more such.

Bill Rose was a hard hitter when aroused, and Krank usually let him alone on that account.

He could do anything mean to the two boys, but he was very nice to Hunks or Rosino, or any one that could lick him.

The whole story came out at the end, and the boys had a good chuckle over it.

"That snap was like a mountain brook after a rain," laughed Bob. "The further it went the bigger it grew."

"Old Kranky got caught in it too, and we had not intended any of it for him either," remarked Dick.

"That was his good fortune and not our fault."

"He'd want to fire us out if he knew it was our racket."

"Oh, he wants a good many things he can't get."

"Yes, and some things he doesn't want he will get."

"A thump in the neck, for instance."

"Yes, if he gets to fooling with Rosy."

There was another fellow in the company that the boys used to like to roast now and then.

This was Signor Pardono, the leader of the band.

His name was just plain Jimmy Pardon, but all your musicians have Italian terminations to their names, you know.

If Pat Foley takes to singing and goes on the stage he always calls himself Signor Foli, and if Sam Brown takes a quarter's lessons in Italy he comes back with his handle changed to Bruno or else twisted around so that you never can tell what it was.

That was the way with Signor Pardono, bandmaster and cornetist of the great United, Consolidated, American, European Twenty Show Railroad Circus, Hippodrome and Congress of Wild Animals, or whatever else it was called on the eighteen-sheet posters.

However, the boys were going to work up a snap on old Pardono. It was a gilt-edged one.

CHAPTER V.

I told you that I would let you into the secret of a quiet little snap that Rob Rattle and Dick Dazzle had arranged for the amusement of Signor Pardono, the leader of the band.

The bandmaster used to do a solo cornet act every evening just before the grand entree of lords, ladies, et cetera, and felt very proud of himself when he was doing it.

For some reason or another the solo had been omitted for two or three nights and Pardono wanted it put on again.

"Don't see why I can't have a show as well as you fellers," said the leader to Winter.

"Well, don't you, Petey?" asked the ringmaster.

"No, I don't, and I want that solo put-in again."

"Where will you have it?"

"Oh, anywhere, so long as I get it."

"Well, take it after the boys have done their act."

"All right."

The boys happened to hear this conversation without intending to listen.

"There's a chance to roast Jimmy Pardon," said Rob.

"Right you are, Robert," said Dick.

In the evening, when they came on, the boys had a couple of striking suits, different from what they had worn in the afternoon, and they looked just stunning.

"Hello, chippies!" cried Rob, turning a handspring.

"Ah, there, my size, all but your ears!" yelled Dick, turning several flip-flaps.

"Hello, young feller! How do you feel?" asked Rob of Dick.

"First class. Never better. Hope you're the same."

"The same what?"

"Hash destroyer. Do you eat as much as you used to, my boy?"

"Why, did I ever have a remarkable appetite?"

"Did you? Well, if you'd paid for what you ate the landlady could have retired long ago."

"That's rough."

"What is?"

"Alligator's back."

"Ah, that's a regular grind."

"What?"

"Coffee mill."

"Well, that's got nothing to do with my eating. You stand me, sir."

"No, I don't. You could eat more than ten Dutchmen."

"Well, your landlady said she'd rather take four Irishmen than take you."

"She did, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why would she?"

"Get four times as much money."

"Well, I say, what is the difference between you and me?"

"I don't know, except that I'm better looking."

"No, that ain't it."

"Well, what is it?"

"Well, you think that I'm a fool, but——"

"No, I don't, I know it, my boy."

"Ah, come off the roof. That's what I was going to say to you."

"That you knew that you were foolish?"

"No, but that you."

"Oh! Well, which would you rather be, good looking or a rich fool?"

"Well, if I was rich I wouldn't be a fool. Fools don't get rich."

"Yes, they do, but they don't stay so."

"Ah, never mind that. Sing something."

"How do you like this?"

This was thus:

"When a boy I went to sea, my fortunes for to mend,

For to pick up lots of gold in distant lands.

When I left the shore my mother did to me this message send,

As a guide when traveling on foreign strands,

'Don't sass the captain, Tom, for he is the boss.

Never give an older man much lip,

Never cheek the skipper, it only brings you loss,

And fortune then will give to you the slip."

"When I grew a man in years, I thought of this advice

When those about me seemed too hard and gruff,

I held my tongue and nothing said for fear they'd smell a mice.

But I never, never gave them any guff.

So don't sass your boss, boys, it don't do any good.

Talking back will bring you treatment very rough,

Giving lip to your superiors is really very rude,

So never give your elders any guff."

That just made the tent shake, and all hands grinned with light.

"You never think of that when you get to giving me back talk," said Rob.

"You are not older than I am."

"What's the reason?"

"We were born the same day."

"But I got the start of you by half an hour, and that makes your superior."

"Well, I can lick you, anyhow."

"No, you can't."

"Fetch on the gloves and see if I can or not."

Then the boys had a comic boxing bout with the gloves, this being introduced for the first time.

Krank hadn't known anything about this, for the boys had practiced by themselves.

Winter knew all about it, of course, for he saw that it would be a taking feature.

The boys always spoke to him about any new business they wanted to work in, and he usually let them have their own way.

When the famous white-faced Momus heard the shouts from the pavilion he knew that something was up.

The applause and laughter continued, and grew so hilarious that the old duffer could not stand it any longer.

He looked out and saw the boys boxing, getting heartier laughs and more cheers than he had ever received.

That took the starch right out of him.

He hated to have a rival in his line of business, and he could see that Rob and Dick were laying right over him.

He was mad enough to bite through the centre pole.

"What gawks!" he growled. "The idea of laughing at that. The people who go to the circus nowadays are all fools."

If he had thought of that bit of business it would have been all right, of course.

He hadn't, however, and that made him mad.

He went right out and found Summer counting up the receipts.

"Those boys are just hogging the business," he growled. "You owe them all the phat, and make me only a second-rate performer."

"Well, can I help it if you find your level at last?" retorted Summer.

"I ain't. I'm the best in the business," snapped Mr. Pete Short.

"In your mind, old man. The people are tired of you. Give the young fellows a chance."

"I'll give 'em a thump in the neck," growled Krank.

He had not got any satisfaction out of Summer, and he was mad.

He knew that he would get a cool reception from Winter if he explained to that gentleman.

If Summer and Winter went back on him he would have to bring on the boys, and then he might get a fall.

He went back to his dressing-room, nursing his wrath and wondering how he could injure those funny Loys.

The latter, meanwhile, had finished their turn and had skipped.

Then came Signor Pardono with his silver cornet.

The leader took up his instrument, which had lain idle for several days, and gave a preliminary toot.

That is, he tried to do so, but no sound issued.

The leader filled his lungs, swelled out his cheeks, tightened his lip on the horn, and blew for all he was worth.

There was an explosion, and a shower of gold paper flew from the mouth of the horn.

It looked just as if he had blown the insides out of the whole business.

Everybody laughed, of course, and Jimmy Pardon was all taken up.

The crowd thought it was going to be a funny piece.

Every time the leader put his horn to his lips there was a shriek.

The leader thought he was being guyed, and got red in the face.

Then when he did at last get a chance to play he struck a false note, and the gang howled again.

They thought it was awful funny.

Pardono finally got made, threw down his horn, and gave the crowd for the whole band to come in with their racket for Rosino's.

He did not try to work in his solo after that until he had first ascertained that his tooter was in good condition.

The circus made a big jump the next day, the caravan starting out as soon as the show was over.

The performers were to follow by rail, but they had to wait until five o'clock before they could get a train.

The Great Rosino overslept himself, and missed the early breakfast which the others got.

He was obliged to grab his grip and skip without getting so much as a smell of the grub.

By running as fast as he could go, he just managed to catch the train and that was all.

This little bit of exercise made him hungrier than he was before.

Then he went among the circus boys to see if he could find something to eat.

Nobody had anything to give him.

Several had swiped sandwiches to eat on the train, but they did not let on to Bill Rose about it.

They rather enjoyed his plight, in fact.

"Hasn't anybody got any grub?" he asked.

"This isn't a dining car!" growled Krank. "Why didn't you come down to breakfast?"

"Ha, depend upon you never to miss a meal," said Rosy. "You're always the first to get to the table."

"And the last to leave it," said Miss Pink, who did not love Mr. Pete Short.

Krank growled out something in reply, and began to study an antiquated joke book for some new gags.

"I wish I could get a bite," sighed Rosy.

"Travel by the emigrant train then," suggested Rob Rattle.

"Ain't there anything at all to eat?" asked Rosino.

"Oh, yes, lots," said Dick.

"Where?"

"In the hotel."

Rose sighed and hunted up a cigar.

Smoking will sometimes stay a man's stomach.

There was no smoking car on the train, however.

Poor Rosy tried to get in the baggage car to smoke, but the conductor fired him out.

Then he thought he might fill up on water.

The tanks were dry and he got left.

They wouldn't arrive in the town where they were to show until half-past one, and would then have to drive right to the grounds and get dressed.

By eleven o'clock poor Rosy was famished.

They had stopped two or three times, but he could not get so much as an apple.

There wasn't any candy butcher on the train either.

At last the conductor came in and yelled out:

"Next stop Slowdown—ten minutes for refreshments."

What a welcome announcement that was to the hungry man!

He could pile in a lot of stuff in ten minutes, for he was an old traveler.

Just let anybody else get within six feet of him when he planted himself in front of that lunch counter if they dared.

He was reckoning on what he would get and the amount of stuff he would fetch back with him into the car.

He had a whole seat to himself and had turned over the one in front of him so as to be more comfortable.

There were four or five women in the car with babies, big or little, in their laps, or on the seats beside them.

Rosy smiled at the one of these kids in a fit of abstraction.

The youngster immediately said "Papa," and wanted to kiss him.

That broke Rosy all up.

It also gave Rob and Dick an idea.

Two women in front of them, one with two kids and the other with three, were wondering how they were going to manage to get something to eat.

"I'm half starved," said Mrs. Bluejeans, "and I must get something. What shall I do with the babies?"

"Just what I was thinking of," said Mrs. Grosgrain. "What shall I do with mine?"

"Slowdown! Ten minutes for dinner!" yelled a brakeman. Everybody started.

"Give your babies to that nice gentleman over there," suggested Rob. "He loves 'em, and will take good care of them."

Mrs. Bluejeans acted upon the suggestion at once.

She grabbed up her three kids, put one on each side of Rosy and the other in his lap.

"You will look after my darlings, won't you, there's a good man?" she gushed, as she made the deposit.

Then she sailed away, and Mrs. Grosgrain dumped her two responsibilities, one on Rosy's off knee and the other on the seat opposite.

"So obliging of you, I'm sure," she warbled. "You look kind, you do, indeed."

Then all the circus boys made a rush for the door.

"Ta-ta, Rosy, old boy."

"So good of you, you know."

"Don't eat the dear things up, old man."

Five kids ought to have been enough, but it wasn't.

The woman who owned the child at whom Rose had smiled, planked it down on the empty seat beside Mrs. Grosgrain's darling.

"There's a deary. Sit still with the dood gentleman till momtherdear dets back, oh, you pootsy-wootsy-tootsy-tunninsing."

And still that wasn't all.

Two more women, each with a brat apiece, dumped them in that seat and waltzed out.

The two others left their youngsters in the seat just across the aisle, and asked Rose to watch out for them.

The poor fellow had a regular day nursery upon his hands.

He could not get up, and there was nobody to shout to.

He and his improvised creche were the sole occupants of the car.

That wasn't the worst of it.

From where he sat he could look right into the railroad restaurant. He could see everybody getting something to eat, and just piling in the grub.

It was like a glimpse of Paradise to a poor sinner on the outside.

And then the babies began to howl.

One of Mrs. Bluejean's cherubs pulled the hair of Mrs. Grosgrain's precious lamb.

Then Mrs. Spratt's lovey-dovey fell off the seat and sprained its collar-button.

At the same time Mrs. Luntytum's pet deary slapped Mrs. Shortcut's own sweet angel on the cheek.

What a howling there was then.

Every individual kid bawled for all that he, she or it was worth.

They pulled Rosy's hair, they scratched his face and they bit him.

They didn't forget to yell all the time either.

"Blame the whole howling lot of you, shut up!" howled Rosy.

He could not get up, for the kids stuck to him like burrs to a fuzzy coat.

And there was everybody having an elegant time shoveling in the hash not twenty feet away.

It was just terrible and no mistake.

"Shut up!" bawled the poor man, but the brats only yelled the louder.

Then Mrs. Bluejeans came tearing into the car in a rage.

"You're a horrid, nasty, mean, cross, old brute," she shrieked, as she grabbed the kids and took them to her own seat.

Mrs. Grosgrain followed, madder still.

"Just wait till I get home, you horrid, ugly, sour-tempered old curmudgeon," she snapped. "If my husband won't just slap your homely old face, I wouldn't say it, so there."

"Did the naughty man make poor baby cry? There, there, sh?"

"Don't cry, precious lamb. Popper-dear will slap the bad ugly man, yes, he will."

Mrs. Spratt next grabbed her lovey-dovey, and Mrs. Shortcut rescued her two darlings, the other woman rushing up all excitement.

One woman thanked Rose for taking such splendid care of her precious lamb, but it sounded too much like sarcasm to be genuine gratitude.

Nobody remembered the poor man and nobody brought him anything to eat.

The babies were lugged off still squalling, and the mothers proceeded to make things pleasant for Rosy by talking at him or giving him black looks.

He got up and went into the next car, hoping to get a little peace and quiet.

"That's a nice thing to do to a fellow," he growled, as the train dashed ahead. "I wonder if I'll ever get anything to eat."

After a time the conductor brought him a lunch basket nicely filled with all sorts of good things.

"The boys thought you might like a little something," he said, as he put the basket in Rosino's lap.

"Might like something!" the celebrated bareback artist snorted.

"Well, I should think I might!"

"Well, there you are."

"I say?" asked Rosino.

"Well?"

"Did Krank contribute anything?"

"No."

"Or them women?"

"No."

"All right then. If they had put in anything I couldn't eat a mite."

"It was the two boys, Mr. Winter and Miss Pink."

"H'm! that's all right," and the hungry man proceeded to business right away.

That afternoon the boys let poor Rosy alone, but at the evening performance they had a dandy snap prepared for him.

He had lately introduced a new ending to his celebrated transformation act.

He finished up in a suit of dazzling whiteness, dove through a long barrel covered with paper at both ends, and then disappeared.

The boys had fixed up that barrel after the end of the day show.

It was bigger than it appeared to be, and Rosino could easily dive through it, smashing out both heads and alighting on his horse as he emerged. The act went along from one change to another, and was rapturously applauded.

At last Rosino got down to his pure white, skin-tight costume.

He looked too lovely for anything.

Then two attendants brought out the barrel and stood, one on a pedestal, the other on the rail.

The barrel did not seem any heavier than usual but it had a good deal more in it.

"Hoop!" cried Rosy, giving the signal.

Then he flew straight for the barrel, his horse going like the wind.

Look out for the magic transformation.

CHAPTER VI.

The Great Rosino, all in white, threw himself head first at the big pasteboard barrel held over the track by the supers.

He went through and lighted on his horse on the other side.

He went in white, but he came out black.

Marvelous transformation.

He was as black as soot from head to foot.

That dazzling white suit of his was soot indeed.

He was covered with it, his head, face, hands, and everything else.

The audience just went mad with glee.

"Rapid change from white to black in one second," laughed Winter.

He did not know what had caused the change either.

All the same, he had to laugh, and no one could help it.

The supers dropped the barrel in great alarm.

A lot of lamp black or soot, perhaps, fell out on the ground.

That gave the thing away.

The barrel had been nearly half full of the stuff.

Lamp black is very light, and it flies like the dickens when disturbed.

Hence the change from white to black when Rosy flew through the barrel.

He went in looking like white marble or chalk.

When he came out he looked like ebony or charcoal.

There wasn't a white spot on him.

How the crowd did laugh!

It made Krank mad, for he thought that even Rosino was trying to cut him out.

That jealous old duffer came rushing out, turning a somersault just to make the people laugh.

It did for a fact.

As it happened, the clown chose for his performance the spot where the lamp black had been dumped.

In a jiffy his hands and face and head were spotted all over with the black stuff.

As for Rosino, when he looked down at himself and saw what had happened, he just guided that nag of his out of the ring and disappeared in a jiffy.

"That was one of that old duffer's tricks, I'll bet a cent," he muttered when he reached his dressing-room.

The people were still laughing at him and at Krank, the latter just having discovered that he wasn't as funny as he thought he was.

The black-and-white-faced Momus skinned out of that as fast as he could go, laying the blame of the whole business on Rosino.

"Everybody in this show thinks he can be a clown," he growled. "I'd like to know what right Rose had to fetch in that funny business. If he does it again, I'll kick."

As he was all the time kicking, there would be no novelty in that, and Winter was looking for new snaps.

Rosino had found out what the matter was by this time, and why he had so suddenly turned from white to black.

"That's the funniest thing Pete Short ever did," he muttered, for he blamed the clown for the accident. "Maybe he won't think it so funny when he has to pay my wash bill for this week."

Winter tumbled to the secret when he saw the soot fall out of the trick barrel, and suspected at once that the boys had put up the snap on Rosy.

"I might suggest to him to do that act every night," he remarked, with a laugh, "but then he might object."

Krank objected when Rose's wash bill was sent to him, but no explanations would suffice, and he was obliged to pay it and swallow his wrath.

"I didn't put the soot on the old fool!" stormed Krank. "Why should I pay for his washing?"

"It looks very much like it," said Winter. "You were the only one who knew anything about it."

"I didn't know anything about it. I only went out to see what all the noise was about."

"Too thin!" laughed Winter. "You went out to see how the trick worked."

"Trick!" snarled Pete Short. "I never play tricks, sir."

"Better learn a few then, and get 'em off in the ring," retorted the ringmaster. "You might be able to get a laugh now and then, if you did."

That made the clown madder than ever, for it implied that was not funny.

However, nobody minded his crankiness, and things went on just the same.

A few days after this the circus struck a good big town and people came out in droves to see the show.

That was just what the boys liked, and they just laid themselves out to please the crowd.

They came on without announcement, dressed like two jays from Awayback.

"Well, young men, what do you want?" asked Winter, as boys fell over the railing and the audience sent up a shout.

"We want to see the show."

"Well, you can't see it here."

"Yes, we can; we ain't blind."

"Get out, I tell you," and Winter cracked his whip at Bob. The latter fell against Dick and upset him, whereupon there was more shouting.

"Can't you give us a chance to do something in the show?" asked Dick.

"What can you do, I'd like to know, you gawks?"

"I can tumble."

"Yes, I see you can."

The crowd laughed again, and Bob said:

"I can tumble tew, mister."

"Well, take a tumble and get out."

Then the audience began to guy the two rustics as they took their turn to be.

"Come on, Josh, let's show 'em something," said Bob.

"All right, Hiram," and Dick squatted down, while Bob tried to jump on his back.

He got there, but Dick could not hold him, and both fell over the ring.

"Come, get out of here!" cried Winter, cracking his whip at the boys.

They tried again, and this time Bob caught Dick on his shoulders and threw him in the air.

There was more funny business of this sort, and finally the boys took off their coats and hats and began to turn flip-flaps.

Then the crowd began to take a drop.

The boys next pulled off their shirts and trousers, and there they were in their regulation clown dresses.

"Didn't know us, did you, boys?" laughed Dick, turning four or five flip-flaps in rapid succession, and coming down in the same place every time.

"Thought we was jays, didn't you?" said Bob, after making cartwheel of himself all around the ring.

Then the big audience got right onto the snap with all their feet, and the applause was something very fine.

That made Krank mad, for he hadn't had quarter as much.

"I say, Bob, where's the best place to be when it rains?"

"Under an umbrella."

"No, sir."

"In the house?"

"No, sir."

"Well, where is the best place to be when it rains?"

"In swimming."

"What for?"

"So you won't get wet."

"That's a nice question to ask—what's the best place to be when it rains? Any fool can tell that."

"Tell it."

"You tell it."

"In swimming, I said."

"Ah, go on!"

"Certainly it is."

"Why is it?"

"Ah, you don't go in swimming often enough to know how it feels."

"I go in once a year."

"Yes, and then you have to be thrown in."

"Did you see it? It's all in the papers."

"What?"

"Reading."

"Say, where do you get your meals nowadays?"

"At the hotel, of course."

"I thought maybe you skinned the ash barrels."

"Like you? No, sir."

"Well, suppose you warble?"

"All right. Let her go, professor!"

The song that Rob sang was something like this:

"Oh, the mottoes that are framed upon the wall,

How often they have made me feel so sick,

But the very best among them all

Is 'Never hit your mother with a brick.'

Then there's 'Never pay your barber,'

'Always live on tick.'

And 'Wait until the copper passes by,'

But the one that in my memory will always bear a nick

Is 'Here's the very best old rock and rye.'

"Oh, how often have I pondered, and read them o'er and o'er.

Those chunks of wisdom hung upon the wall,

There is 'Never turn an Astor or a Gould from your door,'

'If you never stand, you'll never get a fall.'

Then there's another motto that's hung upon the wall,

It's the very best advice to give a feller,

'Don't lend a cent to any one,' but this is the best of all,

'Never lend, but always borrow an umbrella.'"

"Very good advice, my son," said Dick, "and I presume you've been taking it?"

"Yes, I always take advice."

"And other fellers' umbrellas. I missed mine last night."

"I didn't miss it."

"No, you took it."

"I wouldn't have missed an umbrella last night, anyhow."

"Why not?"

"Because it didn't rain."

Then Dick sang something, and both boys did a comical trapeze act which just made the tent shake, the gang laughed so hard.

Krank came in again, later on, but the crowd had seen something better and they wouldn't stand him.

One never cares for tripe and onions after tenderloin and mushrooms, you know.

The boys had a nice little racket ready for the strong man that afternoon.

He was a special engagement for a week only, and his name on the bills was Satsuma Nagasaki Yokotokio, the famous Japanese wrestler, juggler and strong man.

His real name wasn't anything of the kind, but that doesn't matter.

Several attendants entered the ring bearing a platform containing solid iron shot, big fifty-sixes, hundred-pound anvils and trifles like that.

Satsuma came waddling in, with a big umbrella in one hand and a fan in the other.

He was attired in a calico dressing gown, green tights, several yards of ribbon and a black wig, and looked as if he had just stepped out of a Japanese picture book.

Away went the umbrella and fan and the Jap got to work.

First he lifted two fifty-sixes, one in each hand, with neatness and dispatch.

After this he tossed big, plump cannon balls in the air as though they were marbles, catching them on his arms, on the neck, in the back and in his hands.

He was strong, and no error, and the big muscles on his arms stood out like ship's hawsers, as they say in the novels.

You could tell that the weights were really iron by the way they struck the sawdust when he let them drop.

The sweat of his brow was not bogus, either, and it just rolled off and spattered on the board under his feet.

At last the strong man wiped his forehead, spat on his hands, and tackled the one thousand pound ball.

It said one thousand in big white figures, and every one could see them.

All hands held their breath when the Jap lowered himself from the knees and grabbed the ring in the top of the weight.

Then there was a sudden try and a straightening up, and then that Jap turned a somersault in the air, the big weight flying over his head.

He surely was not as strong as all that?

Well, hardly.

That was the little surprise party prepared by the boys.

The one thousand pound shot was a fake.

It was nothing but a big rubber ball blown up and fixed with a handle in imitation of a shot.

Well, that Jap was as much surprised as anybody.

He turned a complete revolution and landed on his back in the sawdust, the big rubber ball falling on his head.

If ever there was a mad Jap he was one.

He said something which was not at all Japanese, and glared savagely around at the laughing crowd as he got upon his feet.

Throwing a contemptuous look at the fake weight, he gave it a tremendous kick and sent it flying through the air.

Krank had run on again to see what the laughter meant.

He was just in time to catch that ball in the head and to go down like a shot.

"Foul ball!" cried Bob, who was in the ring.

Then the Jap vented his wrath in these words:

"If I knew the gilly what run dat thing up agin me I'd paste him in the snoot."

That didn't sound like the rhythmic dialect of Fanland by a large plurality.

Everybody chuckled, giggled and roared and the Jap felt sick.

He kicked the next big weight to satisfy himself that it was not a sell.

Then he felt sorry for it.

That solid shot was all it pretended to be, and Satsuma Nagasaki nearly dislocated his big toe by his freshness.

"If I get queered when I go to lift this thing," growled the Jap, "somebody is going to get it in the neck."

He was not queered, however, and the big audience cheered him.

That somewhat mollified the angry weight lifter, and he finished his turn, only remarking when he left the ring:

"Somebody in this company is too funny, and if I was sure who it was I'd thump him."

The boys heard this remark, and were not scared a copper's worth.

In fact they were all the more eager to play off some harmless racket on the irascible juggler.

However, there was no hurry about it, and in the meantime there were others who would serve the boys' turn just as well.

One of these was Hunks, the big canvasman, who had the bad habit of getting frisky now and then.

Being a big town, he seemed to think it necessary to get on a big jag, and he proceeded to do so after the day show was over.

Bob saw him sneaking toward the stables just before the evening performance with more on board than he could conveniently carry.

He was evidently looking for a good place to take a nap, so as to sleep off the effects of what he had imbibed, and so get ready for a fresh load.

Bob watched Hunks zigzagging to the stables, and then followed in time to see him tumble into an empty stall and roll over upon a bundle of clean straw.

It was not long before Hunks was asleep and snoring.

"I'll fix you, old man," laughed Rob, and then he went off and found Dick.

The boys were not going to work any stuffed snake racket on Hunks this time.

Instead of that they hustled around and found a good-sized calf, the property of the three legged cow in the museum department.

They easily persuaded the bossy to follow them by the present of some cabbage leaves.

When they got him into the stables they laid him to sleep beside Hunks and stood near to watch the result.

Pretty soon Bossy got restless and kicked.

"Lie still!" growled Hunks, imagining that he was in bed with his usual chum, "lie still. Jack."

Then the calf crowded Hunks and tried to get up.

"Keep on your own side of the bed, can't you?" snarled Hunks.

Then the calf lifted up his voice and began to call for his mamma.

You all know what a sweet voice a calf has.

It caused Hunks to wake up a little more, and he muttered:

"For goodness sake, Jack, do stop that snoring."

The boys couldn't stand this, and they snickered right out.

"Baa-aa-aa!" remarked that young piece of veal.

"Shut up!" said Hunks, reaching out to hit Jack a clip.

His hand struck against Bossy's rough coat.

"Great guns! When did you shave last?"

The boys had to let out a little titter to keep from bursting.

Bossy got up and fell over Hunks.

"Ugh! Move over, you great gawk!" grunted Hunks.

Then he slung out his hand and hit the calf in the mouth just as he was going to bleat.

Bossy's rough tongue scraped across his hand, and Bossy's big voice roared in his ear.

"The devil!" he howled, jumping up.

He was beginning to get scared now.

"That's who I am!" growled Rob, in as deep a tone as he could fetch.

The calf helped him out by rubbing his hairy head against the canvasman's cheek, and putting one of his hoofs in Hunks' hand.

Not to mention other things he switched his tail around and took Hunks in the eye with it.

"I want you, Hunks!" roared Bob in basso profundo tones.

That broke Hunks all up and scared him into sobriety.

His legs shook, his teeth chattered and his hair stood on end.

"Woo-ooo!" groaned the boys.

"Baa-aa-aa!" observed the calf.

Hunks jumped up and sent the calf staggering into the corner of the stall.

Then that very much alarmed canvasman bolted out of the stall and took to his heels.

The boys hustled the calf out of that, and sent him in pursuit of Hunks with a slap on the flank.

Hunks heard the noise of hoofs behind him and ran all the faster.

He burst into the canvas quarters of the supers, canvasmen and drivers, with a face as white as ashes.

"What's the matter, Hunks?"

"I've seen the devil. He's after me now."

Just then the calf came bounding in, assisted by Rob and Dick.

All hands let out a shout, and began to guy poor Hunks.

"Been boozing again, have you?"

"That's your brother, Hunks."

"Oh, you great calf."

The canvasman felt very much ashamed when he tumbled to the trick.

All the same he kept sober for two days.

CHAPTER VII.

After that little racket on Hunks the two boy clowns hurried off and dressed for the evening performance, it being nearly time for them to go on.

They went on with a rush when they did go on, but they did not do the jay act again, as they never got off the same gag twice in the same town.

After tumbling around for a time Rob said to Dick:

"What is the difference between you and a monkey, Dick?"

"Well, the difference between you and a monkey is that you can't climb a tree, I guess."

"Well, what's the difference between you and one."

"Give it up. Is there any difference?"

"Not much."

"What is it?"

"The tail."

"Well, why are you like a poor clock?"

"Because I've got two hands and only one face."

"How many faces would you expect to have, you silly?"

"Why, some men have half a dozen faces."

"How is that?"

"It is this way, my son. I can't say it very well; so I'll sing it."

"A man has a face that would smash up a clock,

When you ask him his bills for to pay.

He's a face to kill trees and powder a rock,

When his creditor says 'Not to-day.'

But look at his face when he's off on the mash,

It's as bright as a morning in June.

Then if he must wait too long for his hash,

It's like cranberries gathered too soon.

"His face would melt lead when he wins on the races,

And would freeze up the sea if he loses,

It's as long as himself when he's dumped on three aces,

Or if red comes when the black he chooses.

It's as round as the moon when things go all right.

But all twisted up when they're wrong.

In trouble it's black, in joy it is bright,

And that is the end of my song."

When Rob had finished, Dick turned to him and said:

"Why shouldn't a good workman follow the clock?"

"Well:"

"Because the clock strikes every hour."

"And good workmen never strike. Very true. Why shouldn't a woman be a clock?"

"Because she doesn't need winding up and a clock does."

"Well, my boy, wilt warble?"

"I wilt," and he did, after this fashion:

"If you've plenty of money you'll always have friends,

You can bet on it.

A fat purse for a homely face makes amends,

You can bet on it.

If you've got neither fortune nor face, my dear man,

You're as bad as a tramp and his old empty can,

And you'll wind up no better than when you began,

You can bet on it.

"If you have a good pull you'll grow rich by the minute,

You can bet on it.

Without that you'll find that you are not in it,

You can bet on it.

If you're dabbling in stocks, or just playing ball,

You must lay in a stock of assurance and gall,

"For in life that's the first, the last and all,
You can bet on it.

"It's unwise, to marry entirely for love,
You can bet on it.
For you may find a hawk where you thought you'd a dove,
You can bet on it.
When the wolf comes around, and won't stay away,
With bills rushing in, and no cash them to pay,
"You'll find when you married 'twas a very cold day,
You can bet on it."

"If I asked you to sing some more of that you wouldn't do it?" asked Rob when Dick stopped.

"You can bet on it," answered Dick, and then the boys did some more funny tumbling and then tumbled out.

That evening the boys noticed in one of the reserved boxes a buxom young girl of more or less summers who seemed greatly mashed on Krank.

She applauded everything he said or did, threw him bouquets and just went wild over him.

The next day, when the show was in another town, there she was again, at both performances, making just such a goose of herself as before.

She was evidently greatly mashed on the white-faced Momus, and paid but little attention to the ring when he wasn't in it.

Krank in his turn acted like an old fool and made himself quite ridiculous.

He winked and threw kisses at his daisy, sang all his old songs to her and did everything he did do for her eyes alone.

He was pretty hard hit himself, and Rosino, who was considered the champion masher of the troupe, stood no show at all alongside him.

Mr. Pete Short was completely busted up on the girl and no mistake.

He heard that she was worth no end of a boodle in her own right, and that made him more sweet on her than ever.

When the circus pulled up stakes and skipped for another town, the lovelorn maiden packed her trunk and went with it.

She always had the best place from which to watch the street parade, and she was as regular an attendant at the afternoon and evening performances as the riders, tumblers and clowns themselves.

She kept up that sort of business for a whole week, following the circus around with the fascination of small kids chasing up a hand-organ with a monkey attachment.

The other performers could not help tumbling to the thing, for both the girl and Krank made big fools of themselves.

He was forever mugging her, and she was always grinning at him, and they were both worse than the itch.

She went to every performance, and he stayed in the ring from the time of the grand entree until the wind up, so as to be near his lady love.

Oh, it was a case of love all around, and Krank old enough to know better, too.

After the day show was over, when that sort of thing had been going on for three or four days, the clown would hurry around to the hotel and sit where he could see his mash and throw kisses at her, just like an old stuff that he was.

She was old enough to go out alone, but she hired a maid after that, and that poor woman ran her legs off nearly carrying notes back and forth between those two giddy spoons.

Well, at the end of the week the show took a rest over Sunday, and Krank and his mash had the day to themselves.

They took a walk, and the maid went with them, but that did not make any difference.

Those two gillies spooned just the same as though they had been alone.

They sat together on the hotel piazza after supper till the landlord had to come out and tell them that he wanted to shut up.

The next day the circus went on to another town and the giddy girls went along.

Rob and Dick had become as disgusted as anybody, and they made up their minds to give the famous white-faced jester a roasting.

"That girl's a fool," said Bob, "and Krank is after her money and nothing else."

"She's got to be cured of her foolishness or he'll get it, you bet."

"Well, let's cure her, my boy."

"And get in another one on old Krank?"

"Right you are."

When they reached the town where they were going to show they had their plans all laid.

Between the time of their arrival and the beginning of the performance, they paid five dollars to an accomplice to help carry out their scheme, and everything was ready.

The grand entree was gone through with, and then Winter and Krank came on.

The white-faced Momus got off his usual stock of stale gas firing them plumb at his sweetey, who sat in her same old box and smiled as though it was all new to her.

Every time Krank got a chance he threw a kiss at her, and did all sorts of things to make her look only at him.

Even the audience was beginning to get onto him, for the spooning was a little worse this day than usual.

Presently, as Krank was about to sing, a big, fat Irish woman with seven or eight kids, big and little, came rushing to the railing.

"Oho, Barney, ye falsifier, have I found yez at last?" she howled as she jumped into the ring.

The kids, big and little, male and female, followed her in her haste.

"Come home to yer poor wife and children, Barney, and lave the circus, or else take us along wid yez."

Then all the kids, big and little, began to howl and crowd around Krank.

The fat Irishwoman grabbed him around the neck, and blubbered:

"Oh, Barney, me husband, come home to yer poor wife and shtarvin' children!"

Poor Krank was struck all of a heap.

The woman was not his wife, nor were the kids his children.

The crowd was onto him, however, and all hands had something to say.

"Support your wife, you brute!"

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself, you brazen villain!"

"Make him support you, missis!"

"You ought to be taken out and punched!"

These are only a few specimens of what was said.

Krank was all used up.

He tried to say that the woman was a stranger to him, but he could not get out a word.

In the midst of the racket the lady in the box got up and went out.

"Oh, you deceiver!" she cried, as mad as a wet hen. "Oh, you false, cruel, black, wicked nasty old wretch."

Then she went out and that was the last Mr. Pete Short saw of her.

She took the very first train back to her own town and gave the circus the shake.

The fat Irishwoman and her kids were meanwhile making it very hot for Krank.

"Yez ought to be ashamed av yersilf, Barney," said the woman "to lave yer poor woife behind to shtarve, while ye do be going around the counthry, mashin' all the foine girruls ye see."

"You are not my wife," cried Krank, trying to break away.

The woman gave a scream.
 All the young ones echoed it.
 "Oho, wud ye hear that."
 "Oh, you bad man."
 "Come home, daddy."
 "Put him out!"
 "Ride him on a rail."
 "Punch his head."
 "Tar and feather him."
 Then Winter came to the rescue.
 He knew, of course, that this was a big grind on Krank.
 He also suspected that Rob and Dick had put it up.
 "My good lady," he said, "you are stopping the show."
 "Sure, I want me husband," said the woman.
 "You can have him, but you must go and sit down and not interrupt the performance."
 "All right, but if Barney thries to get away from me agin I'll the polis on um."
 "Well, well, my good woman, that's all right, of course, quite right; he deserves it all, but do go and sit down, you and the children."
 "And yez won't let Barney get away from me?"
 "Oh, no, certainly not," said Winter, who appreciated the joke. I was quite willing to keep it up.
 The boys now came dancing in at a signal from Winter, and the Irishwoman let go of Krank as they came bounding in.
 Away rushed Mr. Pete Short for his dressing-room with the Irishman and her eight children chasing him up.
 He escaped and the woman disappeared, but Krank's goose was kked all the same.
 His mash had gone home, and her fortune had slipped from his SP.
 The local papers had got hold of the snap, and the Weekly Lower came out the next day with the following:

Miss Clarinda Dusendorf, a young lady (once) with a fortune of forty thousand dollars, was in town yesterday, having been ply enamored of one of the performers, whose name we will mention; but having run up against the alleged wife and eight children of the aforesaid performer, her love turned to hate, and shook the town. It is now understood that the wife and children business was a joke, but Miss Clarinda has sickened of her Irish passion, and her cool forty thou will be diverted into another channel."

Krank saw this elegant specimen of newspaper English, as understood by the rural press, and it made him very sick.
 "Forty thousand, hey?" he muttered, "and I won't get a smell of it's a regular swindle!
 Only a fake, hey? H'm! that means that somebody's been giving me for a sucker, but if I find out who it is he'll get fired pretty quick!

That woman never showed up again, of course. Might have wed she wouldn't. It was all Winter's doings. He was jealous of me; but now he's dished, too, for Clarinda wouldn't look at after me."

The famous white-faced Momus was feeling very sore at having that fortune.

It was twice what he had heard it was, and his feelings grew in proportion till he was as mad as a hatter.

"Forty thousand dollars yanked away from me when I almost it cold!" he sputtered. "I'd have married her in another k. and then I'd been solid, confound it!

Elast that Irish washerwoman and her eight kids. I never saw before in all my life. Somebody put her up to it, I'll bet, but get onto him and he'll go out, if it is Winter or Summer r."

h. he was mad enough to chew up the seats and spit sawdust.

He didn't suspect the boys this time, but he was mean enough to vent his spite on them all the same.

However, the boys did not worry over any possible discomfort that he might cause them, but went right on enjoying themselves as though he did not exist.

Two or three days after the sudden departure of Miss Clarinda, the circus put up its tents in a little out-of-the-way place, where they did not have a show more than once in three years, and then everybody turned out for miles around to see it.

There was no end of jays to see the show, and some of them were so green that it was a wonder the cows did not take them for graas and eat them up.

Two or three of them tried to ride the trick mule, but they all got the grand bounce and that made the rest cautious, and there wasn't any more fun to be gotten out of them in that line.

Just before the evening show Rob and Dick mixed in among the crowd around the ticket wagon for the sake of having a little racket.

Dick easily found an opportunity to affix to the back of one of the greenest of hayseeder a big label covered with sticky paste.

Pretty soon that countryman was inside the tent looking for a seat.

Upon his back was the simple legend:

"RESERVED."

"Hello! Sam White is all right," said one of the crowd.

"What's he reserved for?" asked the some one else.

"For the elephant's supper, I guess. He's fresh enough."

Around and around wandered that hayseeder, and a new set of gigglers saw him every minute.

Finally seeing a lot of good seats untaken Sam White set himself down in the best of them and began to munch peanuts.

Then the crowd began to howl and scream.

"He's found his right place, by gosh!"

"They hain't no flies on Sam White, by thunder!"

"Check?" said one of the ushers, coming up.

"What say?" said Sam.

"Where's your check?"

"What check?" and Sam went on crunching peanuts.

"The check for this seat. This is reserved, this is."

"Waal, I don't care. It's good 'nuff fur me, I guess."

"That's all right," laughed one of the jokers behind Sam. "Can't ye see he's reserved too?"

The ushers did not have the keen sense of humor possessed by the other, and he got mad.

"If you haven't got a check for this seat you'll have to get out," he growled.

"What fur?" and Sam White demolished more peanuts.

"What for?" said the astonished usher. "Because I tell you to, that's what for."

"Don't give in, Sam, you're reserved, you know."

"That's all right, Sam. Stay where you are."

This advice from the jokers in the rear was very assuring, although unnecessary.

Sam had intended to stay just where he was.

He had paid to come in, and didn't see why one seat wasn't as good as another.

If the fellows who had come in first did not choose to take the best seats, that was no fault of his.

The usher was not going to be bluffed, however.

"Where's your ticket for this seat?" he demanded.

"Du you own the show?" asked Sam, coolly chucking shells under his feet and masticating the contents.

"I'll show you if I own it!" retorted the man, going for the bumpkin. "You show me your ticket, or get out!"

"I give up my ticket once, yew caow," said Sam, quietly.

"Then you've got to get out. These seats are taken."

"Waal, I hev taken this ong," said Sam, without a wink. "Yew shet yure maouth, and yew won't ketch cold."

The fellows behind laughed heartily at this sally.

The usher wasn't to be bluffed, however.

"You get out, or I'll put you out!" he blustered.

That didn't scare Sam worth anything.

"Yew can try it if yew like," he coolly remarked, keeping up the peanut destruction.

The usher did try it.

He was big and strong, but he hadn't worked on a farm.

Sam had, and when that usher tackled him he just hustled the fellow off his feet and rolled him down the steps.

"Bully for you, Sam! Stay where you are. You're reserved," laughed the jokers in the rear.

Sam hadn't got over his troubles yet, however.

CHAPTER VIII.

The usher Sam had chucked off the seats picked himself up, and then went and got another one to help him.

By this time there were more people in the reserved seats.

"Now, then," said the first usher, standing at the end of the row where Sam sat, "are you going to get out, or ain't you?"

A cross-eyed man sitting near the end thought that the usher was addressing him.

"What'll I get out for?" he asked, indignantly. "I paid for this seat and I'm going to keep it."

The second usher thought this was the man whom the first wanted put out.

If cross-eyes had kept still it would have been all right.

The second usher was not going to be sassed, and he grabbed the man by the collar.

"You're going to keep it, are you?" he growled. "Well, I guess not."

"Hold on, that ain't the feller!" said the first usher. "It's that other chump."

The cross-eyed man was not the sort of fellow to fool with.

He hit out with his right, took that usher in the jaw and sent him sliding down the steps to the rail.

Then he turned his attention to the first usher.

"It's the other chump is it?" he muttered. "Then I'm a chump, am I? Well, you take that!"

The usher thought from the direction the cross-eyed man was working that he was safe.

There's where he missed it.

The man hit him, just as he intended.

Down he went after his companion at the bottom of the steps.

All this time Sam White sat quietly eating peanuts.

He wasn't going to give up his seat if he knew it.

The big card with "Reserved" on it was still on his back, and everybody who saw it giggled.

The tent was filling up fast, and one man told another as soon as he saw the joke.

Sam was perfectly unconscious of the fun he was making, and went right on masticating peanuts and chucking the shells all around.

His time of trouble was at hand, nevertheless.

The two ushers picked themselves up and went and got Hunks, the canvasman, and another big fellow besides.

Then the first usher pointed out Sam, so that there might be no mistake.

Hunks sailed up to within speaking distance, and said:

"Say, Country, you feller eatin' peanuts, I mean, where's your reserved seat check?"

"Don't give in, Sam," laughed one of the jokers on the unreserved seats behind Sam.

Then hayseed turned around to speak to his friend, and the other half of the audience saw the sign on his back and how

"There's his check. Can't you see it?"

"Oh, he's a dandy, he is!"

Hunks saw the joke and laughed, but he meant business, all same.

He jumped over two or three seats, grabbed that countryman and hustled him off it.

Sam had no show with a man of Hunks' build.

He was like a baby in the grasp of the big canvasman.

"You lemme be," he whined. "I paid ter come in."

"Yer paid a quarter, didn't you?"

"Yaas."

"Well, that don't give you the best seat in the house. Get and go and sit up there somewheres."

Cross-Eyes wanted to argue the point for Sam, but Hunks looked crooked at him and he subsided.

He then wanted to pull that ticket off Sam's back, but Sam objected.

He thought the man was trying to pick his pocket and he hit him one in the eye.

The next moment he found himself rolling down the steps.

Then he got up and tried to find a seat, but had to content himself with one away at the top row and around on the side where the entrance doors hid half the ring.

He did not tumble to that sign on his back till he went home, even then he did not see why the people had laughed at him so much.

After the grand procession, Winter and the celebrated Short had their little dialogue, and Madame Floralie did a dandy riding.

Then the snake lady went through her act, and Rosino did a transformation business, and Krank skipped out.

In came Rob and Dick, the former with a big wheel between hands, while the latter had hold of his feet and trundled around the ring like a wheelbarrow.

"Hello, boys and girls," sang out Rob, when this bit of business was finished.

"You ought to say girls and boys, my son," suggested Dick.

"Why ought I say girls and boys?"

"Why the ladies always should come first, you know."

"And the boys follow?"

"Yes."

"Well, they generally do."

"Yes, you're always running after them. I notice."

"Well, can you tell us why a girl is like a ship?"

"That's an old one, ain't it?"

"No, sir, it is just coined. The gloss has not worn off yet."

"Why is a girl like a ship?"

"That's what I said."

"Because it costs so much to fit her out."

"That won't do this voyage."

"Because she likes to anchor near the boys."

"Not this trip."

"What was the question?"

"Ah, go on—you know what it is."

"Because they call her she. Is that it?"

"Nixey."

"Because she has to do what the old man says."

"How many girls do that, my boy? You're away off."

"What kind of a ship is this anyhow?"

"Regular every day ship."

"And what sort of a girl is she, schooner-rigged, clipper-built?"

"What sort of a girl is a clipper-built girl, I'd like to know."

"Why, she goes ahead of all the rest."

"And what's a schooner-rigged girl, my boy, if I may ask?"

"Why, she's one of the kind that nothing but a clipper can catch."

"And what's a cat?"

"You ain't married, or you wouldn't ask that, my son. Well, this girl is just like any other girl. Answer the question if you can."

"What was it?"

"See here, you'll make me hit you next."

"Well, I forgot."

"Do you ever forget your meals?"

"No, 'cause I watch you, and when I see you striking for the dining room, I know I've got to hustle or I won't get anything. How is a little fellow like you eat so much?"

"I only eat what's good for me, that's all."

"Why, you're as bad as a fire, you eat everything within reach."

"That's neither here nor there. I don't believe you can answer my question, and you're just trying to dodge it."

"I'll bet you've forgotten the answer to it yourself."

"No, sir, I have not."

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you give it up?"

"What did you say, anyhow?"

"Oh, you make me tired. I asked you why a young lady was like a ship?"

"You said girl."

"Well, she's grown that much since I asked you first."

"Will she get to be an old woman pretty soon?"

"Yes, if you don't answer my question."

"Oh, I can tell why an old woman is like a ship."

"Well, why is she?"

"Because in her voyage of life she has many mates, but no mas-

"Well, that'll do."

"And I know why a toper is like a ship."

"Why is he?"

"Because he is often half seas over."

"Very good, sir."

"Yes, and I know why a tramp is like a ship!"

"Well?"

"Because he's a cruiser and never likes to pass the bar."

"That's very well, sir, but you have not answered my first question."

"Why is a girl like a ship?"

"Yes."

"You'd better answer it yourself."

"Then you give up the ship?"

"No, I give the girl the ship."

"Well, a girl is like a ship because she is so graceful, because every one is glad when she comes home safely, because all the men are attached to her, and because all the heavy swells are at her side."

"Well, young feller, I guess you must be awfully mashed on the girl, or you wouldn't talk like that."

"Oh, I am, and I'll tell you all about her in a song."

"Go ahead."

Bob went ahead, and this is how he did it:

"There's a charming little girl that lives down in the valley,
She is a sugar plum, and her front name it is Sally.
I go to see her every night and sit upon the stoop,
And all the other boys in town are buried in the soup.
She just thinks all the world of me, this pretty little fairy.
She's one among a million, my darling, charming Sally.
And I'm the happiest fellow in all that lovely valley."

Chorus.

"She's a dandy, she's my mash,
She's a la-la, she takes the cash;
We're going to get married, me and Sally,
For she's the lily of the valley."

"Oh, you are mashed, and no mistake," laughed Dick. "I didn't think you had it so bad."

"Oh, she saved my life the other night."

"Did she? How was that?"

"She baked some cake and gave me a loaf of it to carry home."

"Yes?"

"A tramp attacked me and took the cake."

"Well?"

"The next day he died from eating the cake."

Then the boys did their comical bar act and got out, the big audience winking more, but not getting it.

About this time something happened to Krank.

He could not blame the boy clowns for it, as they did not know anything about it.

The circus was showing in a town up among the hills, where there were some pretty tough characters.

One of these gentlemen had been stealing chickens, running off with the neighbors' pigs, and behaving bad generally.

The farmers and citizens had determined to put a stop to his antics.

The circus drew a big crowd, of course, and this chicken-stealing gentleman was reported to be in town.

Not only that, but he had been seen to enter the hotel where the circus people put up.

Well, it was getting dusk, and the celebrated white-faced Momus, who had lagged behind to get a shave, was just leaving the hotel when he was grabbed.

The chicken thief and pig stealer had been traced to the house, and the embryo vigilantes were laying for him.

In the obscurity they nabbed Krank, who somewhat resembled the man.

If he had gone to the grounds with the rest he would have been all right.

Well, the crowd grabbed him and hustled him off to a bit of woods on the edge of the town.

They did not give him a chance to say anything, for all hands talked at once.

Poor Krank was scared to death, for the men talked of hanging, shooting, lynching and everything else.

When they got to the woods there was a fire already made, and a big kettle of something hung over it.

Four or five of the gang grabbed Mr. Pete Short and stripped him right down to the buff.

He yelled and kicked and struggled, but all in vain.

"We'll give you all the chicken feathers you want, you gorn durned skunk."

"Just knock the tar right aout of him, fellers."

"Yes, but we want to put the tar onto him fust off."

Krank howled and protested his innocence, but all in vain.

"I belong to the circus," he yelled.

"Oh, yes, we'll give you a circus, you bet."

Then they slapped the hot tar on him with whitewash brushes.

It made him jump and yell, but that was nothing.

They plastered him from head to foot with the hot sticky stuff.

Then they rolled him in a feather bed, conveniently ripped open.

When they took him out he looked like a big bird.

He was feathers from head to foot.

Then the artist of the crowd got at him to finish him off.

He got three or four big wing feathers, plastered on a lot more tar alongside Krank's ears and stuck the big feathers in it.

They made the clown look as if he were going to fly.

Then that artist stuck three or four more on top of Krank's head, making a daisy top-knot.

Then a lot of loose feathers were fastened where there were thin places, and Krank looked like a goose.

He was a regular feathered biped now, and would have made the fortune of a dime museum man if he had cared to go on the stage.

The gang was not through with him, however.

"Ride him out of town on a rail!"

"Set the sucker up for a target!"

"Hang him and build a fire under him!"

All of these threats would not be carried out, of course.

The rail-riding act was on the bills, however.

Now a rail is not the easiest kind of carriage to ride in, as some of you may know.

If you don't, you can easily imagine it, I suppose.

Krank had no desire to indulge in that sort of pastime.

He felt certain that all the other little pleasantries that had been promised him would follow, and he was out of it.

When some of the fellows went off to get a fence rail he suddenly broke away.

Down the road he bowled at the top of his speed, the gang following in hot chase.

They had no intention of being cheated out of their fun in that summary manner.

They all took up the pursuit, yelling and shouting like so many fiends.

Krank was not encumbered with clothing or shoes, and he ran like a deer.

It was a matter of life or death to him, so he thought, and he made the best use of his legs.

On came the crowd, but he kept ahead and increased his lead every moment.

It was not very far to the circus grounds, and he could see the lights of the big tent ahead of him.

The crowd in the rear kept up their yelling, and Krank thought that they were gaining on him.

On the contrary, they had no desire to follow him into the circus.

They could see where he was heading now, and they began to think that possibly they had made a mistake after all.

Consequently they kept up their yelling, while they went slow on their running.

Well, the grand entree was over, and Winter had just come in. and was looking for Pete Short to follow, when a strange thing happened.

A curious figure, looking like a big bird with wings on the side of its head and a big topknot above, came suddenly dashing into the ring.

"Save me! Save me!" it yelled.

The crowd on the benches laughed and howled with delight.

They thought this was a part of the show and the funniest thing yet.

The big bird was Krank, scared to pieces, mad as a hatter and all used up.

Winter was astonished to say the least.

He saw that Krank was scared, and that this was no funny business on his part.

The clown just fell down all in a heap and began to cry.

Winter could not stand this, even if he did dislike Krank.

"What in thunder has happened?" he asked.

"Save me," moaned Krank.

"Oh, you're all right. Clear out of this. Go and get dressed."

Krank still continued to moan, while the audience howled the louder.

"The celebrated boy clowns, the Rinaldo Brothers," cried Winter in a loud tone. "Celebrated all over the world, likewise Rosino, the fiercest and most daring rider on earth, Floralie, the dashing lady rider, M'lle. Pinco, the wonder of the air, and our troupe of vaulters and jumpers. Now then, off we go!"

The whole troupe came on, and Krank was hustled off without the audience getting on to the part, the two boys and Winter being then left behind.

The boys took Pete Short's place, filling it much better than he could have done himself, and nobody missed him.

He had all he could do to chuck himself and get the tar off by the

next morning, to say nothing of going on with his act in the ring that evening.

The next day it came out that the tar and feather committee had made a slight mistake, and that the real offender had skipped the town, and was laughing at the blunder of the indignant citizens and farmers.

Much good that did Mr. Pete Short, otherwise Krank.

The committee ought to have discovered their mistake sooner, and he threatened to prosecute the whole town.

That made him a lot of friends in town, of course.

Then he declared that Winter and the boys had put up the job on him so to crowd him out of the show.

He wasn't satisfied with anything, he wasn't.

Perhaps the circus folks liked him better after that?

Well, not much.

CHAPTER IX.

The Great National American and European Railroad Circus of Messrs. Summer & Winter went booming through the land and business was great.

The two boy clowns, Rob Rattle and Dick Dazzle, helped to make it so, for they were the two best bowlers in the deck and were great cards.

Any time that you wanted to drop in upon the show, you would be sure to hear and see something new from those clever boys, even if you went every night.

On the particular afternoon that I have in my mind the boys came on in dress suits of their own contriving.

The claw-hammer coats, low deck vests and full-tide trousers were white, likewise the shut up opera hats.

The freshly-kalsomined shirts, two-story and mansard roof collars and the flaring cuffs were jet black and no discount.

In fact, everything in a dress suit that is usually black was white, and, contrariwise, what was ordinarily white was now black.

That was just the difference and the suits were quite striking.

"Ah, there, peoples," cried Rob, "are you wid' us, or are you agin us?"

"We're wid you," cried all the boys in the crowd.

"That's what I thought!" laughed Rob.

"Let her go," said Dick. "Why does a monkey climb a tree?"

"You ought to know that. Every monkey does."

"Do you mean anything personal by that, sir?"

"Anything you like, young feller."

"Well, if you call me a monkey I want satisfaction."

"Well, there is a deal of satisfaction in being a monkey, don't you know."

"What satisfaction is there?"

"You can always get an engagement on a baseball nine."

"To be sure. What position do you play?"

"I'm a short stop."

"I would hardly think so."

"Why not, sir?"

"I saw you make a very long stop this morning."

"Where was that, sir?"

"At the lunch counter."

"Well, you're pretty good at that yourself."

"I? No, indeed! I've got consumption."

"Yes, so you have—the biggest consumption of grub I ever saw for a little fellow."

"Well, suppose we change the subject. Where was Moses when the light went out?"

"That's old."

"Well, where was he?"

"Ah! go on with your old collar buttons."

"No, sir; this is a freshly laid one."

"Answer it yourself, then."

"You want to know where Moses was when the light went out?"

"Yes."

"Well, if he was looking for his collar button, under the bed, he was in the soup."

"What sort of an answer is that? You ought to get slugged."

"You can't do it."

"I'll try it, anyhow."

That was the signal for the comic boxing bout which the boys indulged in now and then.

It was quite funny and the crowd in the tent did not want to let the boys stop.

"Let up, fellows," said Dick. "We can't run the whole show. I'll give you a song to keep you quiet."

What Dick gave them was this:

"How well do I remember the school-house on the hill,
And the freckle-faced old maid who taught us there,
Of lickings and tongue-lashings we surely got our fill,
And sometimes she used to pull our hair.
She would take our knives, marbles and oftentimes our lunch,
And make us stand on one leg half an hour,
She would wallop us in singles, and also in a bunch,
And her smile would turn a ton of milk quite sour."

"Oh, it makes my back ache now, to think upon that school,
And the thrashings and the bastings that I got,
You can bet she was a daisy, or else I am a fool,
For we always got it very strong and hot.
So don't you talk to me of happy boyhood days,
And say this is the happiest time in life,
For the fellows that will tell you that are only crazy jays,
And I'd like to hit 'em with a carving-knife."

"You must have had a hard time at school?" said Rob.

"Oh, I did."

"That's why you never went, I suppose?"

"How do you know I never went? Did you use to go on the hook with me? I don't remember."

"What branch did you enjoy most?"

"Well, our teacher used to get rid of the whole tree before the term was over."

"Ah, switch off."

"No, sir, I have been there too often."

"Been where?"

"Switched off."

"Well, you needed it."

After this the boys did an improved comic mule act and then skipped out to give somebody else a show.

Old Krank did not like it that the boys were so popular, and he did all he could to annoy them.

He had an idea that he might make them so tired that they would leave the show, and that then he would have the field to himself.

He did not know the staying powers of those two jolly boys.

They knew a good thing when they had it, and were not likely to throw up a fine engagement for an old duffer like Pete Short.

If they had really desired they could have made him tired instead of getting there themselves, but they only rattled him when he became too fresh.

They were satisfied to let him alone and work rackets on others, except when he made himself a trifle too obnoxious, and then they went for him hot and heavy.

The best of it was that he often got into trouble through his own crankiness and not through any racket that the boys worked upon him, and here was where they had the grand laugh on him.

I may tell you about some of these rackets later on.

About now, however, the Great Rosino got it nicely from the boys.

Rosy, you must remember, was great on the mash.

He thought that all the girls were in love with him.

Speaking in metaphor, he imagined that he captured all their hearts and wore them on a string around his neck, in much the same fashion that an Indian brave adorns his person with the top-knots of his enemies.

If Rosy saw a girl but look at him out of the southwest corner of her eye, he put it down at once as an indisputable fact that she was clean gone on him.

He would wink and smile and kiss his hand as he dashed around the ring and endeavor to complete the conquest.

If he saw a pretty girl in the street he would ogle her as he passed by and then turn his head and do no end of mugging in the belief that he was making himself simply irresistible.

In fact, he made a regular two-legged donkey of himself in this particular, and afforded all hands, and especially the boy clowns, no end of fun.

Rob and Dick had caught onto his mashing propensities early in the game and had promised themselves lots of larks on that account.

They had already roasted Rose a couple of times or more, and were still ready to carry on the business in the same fashion as before.

In one town which the circus visited, the one mentioned at the start in fact, there was one young lady who thought the boys were just too lovely for existence in their nobby dress suits.

Rosy was on in his celebrated act, and he at once jumped to the conclusion that the young lady was looking at and applauding him.

It never entered his head that the boys were the object of her admiration.

He tried to catch her eye, smiled, threw kisses and made grimaces, but all in vain.

He was not in it and the boys were, but he would not acknowledge that he could possibly have a rival.

"She is only too coy, that is all," he thought, "but she is mine—she has yielded to the fascination of my face and figure, and I have but to say the word to bring her at my feet."

After the show, on the hotel veranda, the boys became acquainted with the young lady, and enjoyed a very pleasant chat with her.

She lived at the hotel and it was, therefore, no hard matter to make her acquaintance.

During the chat Rosy passed by several times, and every time he passed he glared at those jolly boys as though he wanted to eat them.

"Who is that funny-looking man?" asked Miss Robinson, as we'll call the young lady. "Is he one of the performers?"

"That is the Great Rosino," laughed Rob, "and he thinks you are in love with him."

"How deliciously absurd!" said Miss Robinson. "I haven't looked at him."

"He will say you have, and that you are just dying to throw yourself in his arms."

"But I never even noticed him before."

"We can have some fun if you will help us," chuckled Rob.

"Certainly I will. How are you going to have it?"

Rob laid out his little plan, and the young lady thought it was immense.

During the show that evening Rob went to Bill Rose and said:

"You saw that pretty girl we were chinning with this afternoon, didn't you?"

"Yes, of course. She's gone on me."

The work was going to be easier than the boys expected.

"That's what I was going to tell you," said Rob. "Rosy, my boy, she adores you, and will grant you an interview this evening in room number seven."

"I knew she was washed," chuckled Rose. "I wonder if she's rich?"

"Immensely."

"Then I'll marry her."

"Do so, my boy, and take my blessing."

At the close of the show Rosy dressed himself with great care and hurried around to the hotel.

In the hall he met a coon, who had been posted.

"Where is room number seven?" asked Rose, giving the coon a dollar.

"Dis way, sah. I show yo'. De lady am waitin' fo' yo', sah. Right dis way."

Rosino's heart thumped against his ribs after the fashion of a spile-driver, and he hurriedly arranged the curls of his blond wig as he followed the moke.

Along one passage, upstairs, down through this and that passage, around and about and all over went poor Rosy in the wake of that nig.

"Here yo' am, sah," said the ducky, suddenly throwing open a door at the end of a long, dark passage.

Rosy dashed through, and the door was immediately closed.

He found himself in a small yard in the rear of the hotel, and not far away was a lighted window with the shade drawn down.

Suddenly two shadows appeared on the shade in good, strong black silhouettes.

A young girl with fluffy bangs and a young fellow with a mustache were standing face to face, and very close at that, so close, in fact, that their lips presently touched, and remained glued together for several moments.

"Perfidious creature!" hissed Rose. "All is at an end between us, and my idol is shattered."

Then he dashed into the house, rushed into the first room he found, and beheld Rob and Dick fixed up with wigs and other properties, doing the osculation act in front of the shade, with a light behind them.

"Ah, there, Rosy!" cried Rob. "We are practising some new business. How do you think it will work?"

Rosino tumbled in a jiffy.

"Ha, ha! ho, ho! he, he! Very funny," he said, with a hollow laugh, such as is often used by the villain in melodramas, "very funny indeed. Good evening, you confounded young jokers. I'll see you at the inquest."

Then he skipped out, very mad, although he afterward laughed as heartily as did the boys themselves over the little racket.

"I might have known," he muttered, "that they were up to some prank. Next time I will know better than to trust them."

Perhaps not, however. It was not long after this that the famous white-faced Momus took one of his jealous fits, because the boys were catching on so well with the crowds.

One night, after he had finished with his part of the show, he went to his dressing-room, mad enough to do anything.

He had a bottle of something in his valise, and he went to it for consolation.

There must have been considerable need of his being consoled by the way he stuck to the flask.

He drank and drank and then he actually got to drinking.

In short, he would have been drinking yet if the bottle had held enough.

The more he drank, the less consoled he was, for he wanted more.

There is a limit to everything, however, and at last the bottle was empty.

Then the cranky old duffer sat down and went to sleep.

He had not changed his clothes nor washed his face, and the company was to leave by a late train after the show was over.

Train time was nothing to him, apparently, for he snoozed right on through the rest of the show and while the members of the troupe were getting ready to leave.

Some of the canvasmen discovered him snoozing away the time when they went to strike the tents.

Hunks told Winter and the latter went and tried to wake up Krank.

That was not an easy matter.

The celebrated Pete Short was so overcome by the libations as to require more than an ordinary shaking to wake him up.

"Come on, Krank, it's time to go to the train!" yelled Winter, accompanying the remark with a shake.

"Ah, you go sit on self," grunted Krank. "Whaz mazzar wiz you, hey?"

"Come on, I tell you, and get your train."

"You go to blazes an' min' bizness, see?" was the answer.

"But you'll get left, I tell you," persisted the ringmaster.

"Never get lef' yet. I'se boss clown in er bizness. M' name's cel'brated Pete Short, famous whi'-faced jesser, see?"

"Ah, go soak your head for a week," muttered Winter in disgust.

Then he went away and gave some orders to Hunks.

The latter got somebody else, and the two of them grabbed Mr. Krank and hustled him out of that.

They put his ulster and a high white hat on, and lugged him off to the train.

He growled a bit, but that did not make any difference.

When Hunks was told to do anything by Winter he did it.

The two canvasmen walked Krank at a lively pace to the station, arriving there just ahead of the train.

The two boy clowns were waiting for it when the procession came up.

"Where are we going to put him?" asked Hunks.

"Put him in the smoker," said Rob.

"Or in the cooler," added Dick.

"Or in the soup," suggested Rosino, the great.

"In jail," suggested Pardono, the leader of the band.

"He'll get there all the same," said Hunks.

"Put him in the baggage car," said Winter. "I wouldn't ride with such an old stuff."

Krank was put in a corner seat of the smoker, which was the last car on the train.

The rest of the gang went in another car and left Mr. Pete Short alone.

He looked comical enough with his white head and face and clown costume, dressed in an old ulster and high white hat.

In fact he had not been so funny by design for a long time.

He was still quite boozy, and was inclined to be ugly as well.

One of the boys skipped into the car after the train had started and stuck a cigar in his mouth to increase the funny effect.

A few of the passengers looked at him at first and smiled.

After that they paid little or no attention to him, and he snoozed away in peace.

The train did not make many stops, and it was some time before the conductor came around.

Krank was the last man he struck.

"Ticket!"

"Wha' say?"

"Come, give me your ticket."

"Whaz mazzar wiz you? G'on away an' don' bozzar me, I ain' go' no ole ticker. Wha' I wan' of a ticker. G' out o' zis."

The conductor could be as cranky as Krank himself.

"Gimme your ticket, I tell you," he remarked.

"Ain' got no ticker. Go to thunder, you ol' turkey buzzard."

The conductor objected to being called a turkey buzzard. Who would not?

He grabbed hold of Krank and gave him a good shake.

"Come, wake up, you old fool, and gimme your ticket."

"Ole fool you'se'f, see? Ain' got no ticker."

"Then you can't ride."

"Whazzar reason?"

"You must pay your fare or get off."

"Thaz a' right," growled Krank.

"No, it ain't."

"Yes, 'tis, ole Cabbage-head."

The taker of tickets was getting riled.

"Come, come, give me your ticket or pay your fare," he growled, giving Krank a lively shaking up.

"That's a' right, I say," muttered Krank, with a sour look, "I b'long wizzer show."

"What's that?"

"I'm wizzer show."

"Yes, you are, in 'a horn. You can't bluff me."

"G'on, who's bluffen!"

"You are."

"No, 'ain't; g'on wiz you."

"Give me your ticket, then."

"Agent got ticket, I b'long to ze show. Know who I am? I'm clown, bes' one in biz, knock 'em all out. See? I ain't got no ticker. Don' need no ticker. Ride fo' nussen."

The conductor thought otherwise.

"What are you giving me?" he demanded, roughly. "You ain't no clown."

"Yes, am, selbrated whi'-face jesser, ze bes' in er biz."

"Ah, go on. You don't belong to the show at all."

"Yes, do, teller."

"Get out. I've got all the tickets for the show folks. Guess I know the clown when I see him."

"Thass me, ole Wall," grunted the clown, squinting cross-eyed at the conductor.

"Don't you get sassy. You're just an old fake, that's what you are, trying to beat your way on the road."

"Wha' say?" asked Krank, with a gulp.

"You ain't no clown. You're only a tramp. Pay your fare or get off the train."

"Won' do neezer."

"You won't?"

"No."

"We'll see if you won't."

"You can't see nossin', anyhow, old Skeezeicks," gurgled Krank. "You ain't no good anyhow. Can't bluff me, you ole pirate. Hooray! Whoop! Hadder go way, got scared out, whoop!"

The conductor had turned, sure enough.

Krank's triumphant whoop was slightly too previous, for all that.

The ticket juggler had gone, but he meant to return shortly.

He did so, bringing some one with him.

Two big brakemen accompanied him.

When the party reached Krank the conductor pulled the bell rope.

The train came to a standstill.

"Now then, are you going to pay your fare?" demanded the man in blue.

"No, I ain't, ole Garbage."

That was too much for the conductor.

He might have stood being called a turkey buzzard, but this went beyond him.

"Put him off, boys," he said.

The two brakemen grabbed Krank.

He was yanked out of his seat in a hurry.

In fact, he stood no show at all.

His long ulster was pulled off his back, and his white hat fell on the floor.

He tried to expostulate and to explain, but the time for that had gone by.

Explanations were useless at this stage of the proceedings.

"Hustle him out, boys."

The boys did hustle him out, you'd better believe.

They left him standing on the track in the moonlight at the rear of the train, while they jumped aboard.

The conductor gave the bell cord a yank and stood smiling at Krank from the rear platform as the train began to move.

Krank was getting sobered up by this time, what with the hustling he had received.

"Good night, gentle stranger," said the conductor on the platform. "You thought you could bluff me, didn't you?"

The train began to move more rapidly.

Krank began to grasp the situation.

He couldn't grasp the car rail, however.

"Good-by, old joblots," cried the conductor, waving his hand.

"Hope you'll have a pleasant journey."

Oh, yes, very pleasant.

CHAPTER X.

Poor Pete Short, otherwise Krank, stood on the railroad track in the moonlight, watching the receding train.

Somebody else was also watching the train.

In fact there were several somebodies.

Four or five tramps walking along the track had stepped aside to let the train pass.

They were now on the track again, and not very far away.

They caught sight of Krank in his clown dress and white head, watching the train.

"Hello, what have we struck?"

"Something fine, I guess."

"Let's take it in."

"I'll buy us a round of drinks, anyhow."

"The first feller catches it, keeps it."

Then those tramps made a break.

Krank heard them coming, gave one look backward and dusted.

"Hi, hi, help, come back here!" he yelled, going along the track.

He was getting sobered up now, and realized his danger.

Half a dozen hungry tramps were more than he cared to tackle.

Consequently he raced away, yelling at the top of his lungs.

He may have thought that the train would stop and pick him up, or he may have yelled simply from fright.

At all events he did yell and at a lively rate.

"Come on, fellers, let's catch it."

"Yes, we mustn't lose it."

"First man in gets it all."

Away went Krank, and after him followed those tramps.

They were not pretty-looking fellows, those tramps.

Their beards were ragged, their hair uncombed, and their faces dirty.

Moreover, they had their clothes fastened on them with bits of rope, wire, clothes pins and other odds and ends.

They were pretty tough citizens, and one would do well to keep out of their way.

That was a dandy procession that went flying up the track.

Krank in the lead, in clown dress, and the tramps close behind.

It was a sight to make a cat laugh.

Wouldn't our two merry boys have liked to have seen it?

Krank did not seem to see anything funny in it.

He was nearly scared out of his senses.

There wasn't a bit of hilarity in it, according to his notion.

However, some people never can see a joke.

The running, and the air, and the scare, and the excitement accomplished one thing, however.

He was sober enough now, no matter how rocky he had been before.

There was plenty of light, as I have previously remarked, and Krank could easily see his pursuers as they came dashing after him.

You can bet that he put in as lively a time as he had ever done in all his life.

The tramps soon recognized the character of their victim, and kept up the chase for the fun of the thing.

Lots of fun it was for Krank—in his eye.

Railroad ties are fine things to run on, too, you may know.

The old duffer stubbed his toes now and then, but he managed to keep his feet, which was quite important.

He was a better runner than the tramps, and he was pretty well frightened besides, and so put forth all his speed.

He made good time and rapidly increased his lead on his pursuers.

They soon got tired of such hard work as running on the railroad track and stopped.

They kept up a yelling, however, so as to rattle their victim.

Krank dashed ahead faster than ever, thinking that the bums were right behind.

Too much suddenness generally brings you into trouble.

The famous white-faced Momus found such to be the case in this instance.

He was in such a furious hurry to get away from the tramps, that he struck his foot against a tie, took a header, and rolled down the bank at one side of the track.

There are sometimes ditches at the bottom of embankments.

Krank found one of them on this occasion.

He found it all over when he did find it.

He went head and ears and all into a lot of black, muddy, filthy water, and when he came out he smelled like a sewer.

If the tramps had met him now they would have left him in disgust.

In fact, he was very much disgusted with himself, or as much so as such a conceited old duffer could be.

He limped up the bank to the track and stood there for awhile in meditation, while he allowed himself to drain off.

"Gosh blame that dashed blanked mutton-headed goldurned son of a pirate to everlasting ding blasted smash, plague take him," he at length muttered.

Then he dug out his ears, wiped his face on his sleeve and made some more remarks.

They were not very pretty, however, and I will let you imagine them.

"Goldurn him anyhow, for a pig-headed fool, what business has he to put me off the train, when my ticket was paid for? I'll sue the road, you bet, and make them sweat for this."

However, the first thing to do was to get somewhere and change his duds.

There was no further danger from the tramps, those gentlemen having given up the chase.

But oh, how his clothes reeked with the perfumes of that ditch!

A man with no nose could have smelled them at forty rods.

Stagnant water, the remains of defunct felines, and a little of everything else was plastered over him.

In no pleasant state of mind, Krank set out for some place of shelter, he cared not where.

If one of the famous sleuthhound detectives you read about had been on Pete Short's track at that time he could not have failed to keep the scent.

Krank left a good wake behind him, water running from all sides of him at every step and trailing along the track.

It was not a cold night, and the moon was shining, but being wet and being dry or even a summer night are two dissimilar things.

The hapless clown began to sneeze, and wheeze, and choke and cough, and shake and shiver, and do everything else uncomfortable.

Not being an analytical novelist like Howells, I won't let Krank dramatize his feelings, as the former would say, but will proceed to business and jump three or four hours all at once.

In the early morning the renowned Pete Short, looking very much the worse for wear, came in sight of a town on the line of the road, the very one, in fact, where the circus was to show that day.

He had walked all the way, and he did not feel any better for it.

He had a very large-sized head on his shoulders, the result of the previous night's potations, and that made him ugly to begin with.

Then he was tired and lame and footsore and disgusted, and all these things only made his temper the more demoniac.

Here he was then, in sight of the town where he had been billed as the celebrated and only Pete Short, the best clown in the business, dressed in water soaked and very odoriferous garments not at all appropriate for street wear and with a face on him that would kill trees.

When the train bearing the circus company was approaching the town where the party was to stop, Winter went off in search of the clown.

Naturally enough, he did not find the celebrated white-faced jester.

Then he asked that smart Aleck of a conductor where Krank was, describing him for purposes of identification.

Then the whole business came out.

"Why, I bounced him. He gave me guff, and I thought he was bluffing me and trying to beat his way."

"Well, you are a clever one," laughed Winter. "This will cost you something, for Krank will sue you and the railroad company and recover heavy damages. You'd better make over all your real estate and diamonds and such to your wife, or you'll lose 'em."

"I haven't any real estate," said the rattled conductor.

"How long have you been on this road?"

"Ten years."

"Ten years conductor on a railroad, and you don't own houses and lots and drive fast horses, sport big diamonds, and own a yacht? Why, you evidently don't understand the first principles of business, my dear man."

Winter enjoyed rattling the unfortunate conductor, although he considered what the latter had done a good joke upon Krank.

You may remember that he didn't greatly admire the Shakespearian jester, and consequently he liked to see him come up with now and then.

"Old Kranky will have a nice little walk of it," he remarked to Rosino, after they had left the train.

"And serves him right," answered Rose.

"He can't blame any of us for it either."

"We ought to give him a fine reception when he comes in," said Summer. "How would a parade do with him at the head of it?"

"That might please him too well," said the leader of the band, "and if I played for him I would choose the Rogues' March for a tune."

The troupe went to bed, and in the morning when they arose Krank was still missing.

That did not make any great difference, however, for Rob and Dick could do all the funny business that was required, and do it much better than Pete Short in the bargain.

It was just before breakfast, and all hands were sitting on the hotel piazza awaiting the call to hash and enjoying the invigorating morning air as well.

Suddenly there was considerable of a commotion on the main street, and a mob was seen approaching, one figure in the lead seeming to be the cause of all the fuss.

On came the crowd, and the pursued, as he was now seen to be, was recognized by the party on the piazza.

It was Krank, not in his best suit of clothes by any means.

He was racing down the road, in the middle thereof, as tight as he could go, and after him came a motley crowd of men, boys, dogs, children and pups, all howling and yelling for all they knew.

His clown suit was soiled and torn, his face was all colors, and he looked the picture of distress.

"Well, he's a fine-looking advertisement for our show," said Summer.

"He's got his parade, anyhow," added Winter, "and Jimmy didn't have a chance to play any appropriate selections."

"They'll kill him if they catch him," cried the Great Rosino. "A mob has no soul entirely."

"Give him the tip there," said Rob, as Krank came in front of the hotel, panting, puffing and blowing. The two boy clowns

suddenly sprang out into the road, seized Krank by the arms, one on each side, and hustled him into the hotel.

No matter how much they might like to play pranks upon him they could not see him in distress without trying to help him.

Winter, Rose, the leader and one of the leapers jumped out after the boys and kept the crowd back while Krank escaped.

The clown had encountered some of it as he came into town, and after that it had grown as he hurried on.

Some fellows would have been grateful to the boys for what they had done for Krank.

The latter was not built that way, and he blamed the boys for having played the original racket on him and so caused him all his trouble.

They hadn't done anything of the sort, if you remember.

However, Krank declared that they had, and made up his mind to get even with them.

He was too much used up to appear that afternoon, and he declared that the boys were jealous of him and had worked it so that they would have the whole thing to themselves.

"Oh, you go to bed," said Winter, when Krank complained. "The boys did not know anything about it. You were so drunk last night that you didn't know enough to change your clothes, and we had to take you on board just as you were. Then you sassed the conductor, and he put you off."

"I'll sue the company and have that conductor fired," snarled Krank, determined to get square on somebody.

The boys did have things their own way that afternoon, sure enough, and they made the most of it.

They came in with Winter, after the grand procession of knights in the tin breastplates and pasteboard helmets, accompanied by their ladies fair in cotton velvet and paste jewelry.

"Good afternoon, friends," said Rob. "How are you yourself this summer, Mr. Winter? You are looking fine."

"Well, I feel so, sir—as fine as silk."

"As fine as silk, eh?" said Dick. "Well, you need muslin. Do you catch?"

"You'll catch it," and Winter snapped his whip at Dick, who jumped over Rob to get out of the way.

"Never mind him, sir," said Rob. "You know yourself that they never muzzle puppies."

Rob got a crack that time, or at least he jumped as though he had, and Dick laughed and slapped him on the back.

"Can you tell me, sonny, why a miller wears a white coat?" asked the merry fellow.

"Of course I can," said Dick. "It is so that the flour won't show on it."

"No, sir."

"What is the reason, then?"

"Don't you know?"

"He wears it to keep warm."

"No, sir."

"Why, then?"

"Well, sir, a miller wears a white coat because he doesn't wear a black one."

"Ho! that's a fine answer. I'll give you one."

"Pass it along."

"What makes more noise than a foghorn?"

"You do, when you snore."

"That isn't the answer."

"It's the truth all the same."

"Here's another."

"Play ball!"

"What's the difference between breakfast and dinner?"

"About four hours."

"It wouldn't be that much if you could get your grub whenever you wanted it."

"I don't eat grubs, sir. Grubs are insects."

"So are you one."

"What kind of an insect am I?"

"A very fly one."

"He-he—so I am. Very good, sir."

"Yes, because you always go for the sugar, and do more buzzing than business."

"What sort of an insect are you, my boy?"

"I ain't any kind."

"Yes, you are."

"What am I?"

"A caterpillar."

"'Cause why?"

"Because you make the butter fly, and the grub, too, my boy."

"Well, let's have a song."

Thereupon the boys eased their feelings by singing as follows:

"Do you know why a man with nothing at all
Succeeds, while another one goes to the wall?

It's the sand.

Why does one carry off all the prizes of life,
While another one falls in the struggle and strife?

It's the sand.

Why do some men in all they go into succeed
While others are always in want and in need?

It's the sand.

It's the sand and the grit that makes a man win,
And if you've not got it, you'd best not go in,
Get some sand."

The audience laughed, and then the boys kept them amused with one thing and another nearly all the afternoon.

Krank appeared in the evening, and went through his usual business, but he was not good for much, and soon skipped out to make room for Rob and Dick, who carried the crowd right along with them, and gave it all the fun it wanted.

In a few days Krank was all right again, and then he began to meditate trouble toward the boys.

He knew well enough that they had not played that last snap on him, but he was soured on them and wanted to get them into a scrape.

The next time they had a railroad jump he went into the baggage car and swiped the checks on the boys' trunks, so that they would go astray, and the young fellows would have no wardrobe until it was hunted up somewhere on the road.

Rosino happened to see him do it, however, said nothing, and looked out that the boys' baggage was put off with the other stuff, and Krank was both surprised and disappointed to see the boys show up as usual ready for their act, and as full of fun as ever.

Well, the circus continued on its travels, and Rob and Dick kept right along with it, pleasing the multitudes with their funny things, their funnier sayings and their comical songs, and continuing to find fun wherever it was to be found, and stirring up things whenever there was a good chance.

You could not expect Krank to be anything but a nuisance with his name and his disposition, but all his grumblings made no impression upon the boys, except to stir them up to play roots on him when he got too recent, and no one sympathized a bit with the crusty clown when he got roasted.

And now the show is over, or for the present at all events, and so we will bid adieu to our merry young friends, Rob and Dick, The Two Boy Clowns.

THE END.

Read "KRANK, THE CLOWN; OR, SAWDUST AND SPANGLES," by Tom Teaser, which will be the next number (72) of "Snaps."

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